

A Critical Re-appraisal and Re-alignment of the
Viewing Screen by means of an Experimental Body of
Fine Art Practice

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Abstract

The typical rectangular viewing screen is a ubiquitous tool in the everyday, a formal presence in the workplace, at home, and in public spaces. The result of such ubiquity is the viewer's desensitisation towards the screens increasingly invisible objecthood. Instead, a hierarchy of viewership is formed – focus on images preceding focus on the screen structures that deliver them.

This research employs an experimental body of fine art practice to critically re-align and re-centre the viewing screen in this embedded viewing hierarchy of image first, structure second. Initially centered around the hybridised practice-based methodology driving this enquiry, subsequent chapters in this thesis map the range of the practice's investigation. These chapters include 'Objecthood of the screen', 'Screen and mobility', 'The Problematic Image', and 'The Phenomenological Screen' and 'Moving Image Precedents', each providing a basis for interrogative practical outcomes through relevant theoretical literary sources and fine art-centric contextual references.

This research contributes a key finding and new knowledge to the field of the visual arts in this unique critical appraisal, and subsequent realignment of the viewing screen engendered by the various thematic aspects and unique conceptual frameworks presented in and alongside its experimental body of fine art practice. Provoking a re-evaluation of viewer engagement with the screen may encourage a change in viewership of screen-based image in a society increasingly dependent on digital imagery.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
Research journey	2
Chapter overview	4
 CHAPTER	
1: PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	10
Practice-based vs practice-led research	11
Practice-led research	15
Action research, iterative outcomes	18
Material thinking, speculation	19
Interdisciplinary methodology	22
Hybridity	23
Writing	25
Exegesis	27
Qualitative and quantitative feedback	28
Collaboration	30
Technical specifications	30
Hardware	31
Software	32
Fabrication	33
Summary	34
 2: SCREEN OBJECTHOOD	36
Range	36
Electronic presence	37
Ambiguity	40
Historicism	43
Screen ambiguity in visual arts	45
Interior, exterior, frame	52
Screen as frame, parergon	61
Pure screen parergon	68
Summary	70

3: SCREEN AND MOBILITY	73
Range	74
Typical viewing encounter	75
Authoritative screen	76
Regarding virtual reality	80
Anaesthesia	83
Obliquity	84
Emancipation	94
Emancipatory obliquity	101
Transgressive mobility	107
Mobility, scale, and concealment	115
Kinetic screen	121
Summary	130
4: THE PROBLEMATIC IMAGE	132
Range	132
Content and structure coalescence	133
Distantiation	136
Distantiation in practice	140
Problematic image	144
Joya: Arte + Ecología	145
Why landscape?	149
Fallibility, screen artifice, distortions	150
Indeterminacy	157
Depth, layering, concealment	159
Effects on interpretation	167
Collaboration	171
Screen and absence	178
Anxiety in absence, mourning	181
Modes of absence	183
Temporality, simultaneity, meniscus	187
The persistent image	193
Summary	199

5: THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL SCREEN	201
Range	201
Already there implicit agreement	204
Aura	209
Projector	210
Diffuser	211
Screen as emitter	215
Hidden light	218
THEOREM	223
Summary	224
6: MOVING IMAGE PRECEDENTS	227
Range	227
Structural film	228
Michael Snow	228
Peter Gidal	232
Temporality	236
Physical edits	239
Digital edits	242
Relation	251
Nam June Paik	252
Live feed	253
Live disruption	256
David Hall	258
Screen sculptures	261
Electronic superhighway	265
Obsolescence	267
Multiscreen	270
Saturation	272
Relation	276
Bruce Nauman	278
Spatiality	281
Neon	284
Anthony McCall	287

Relation	293
Summary	294
CONCLUSION	298
Screen Objecthood	298
Screen and Mobility	300
Problematic Image	301
The Phenomenological Screen	303
Summary and contribution to knowledge	305
TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS	307
BIBLIOGRAPHY	314
APPENDIX	324
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	347

Introduction

The core argument of this research posits that the rectangular viewing screen is a ubiquitous tool in the everyday, a formal presence in the workplace, at home, and in public spaces. The result of such ubiquity is that the screen's objecthood is rendered increasingly invisible. Instead, a hierarchy of viewership is formed by technological advancements and viewing encounters that prioritise engagement with screen content over that of the screen structure itself.

This research aims to destabilise these notions of hierarchical viewership and viewer desensitisation by provoking a re-appraisal and re-alignment of the viewing screen, instead encouraging a critically sensitive relationship between the viewer and the screen. The primary objective of the research is to develop of an experimental body of fine art practice and associated unique conceptual frameworks that achieve this aim. Encouraging this re-appraisal is intended to engender an alternative, critical relationship to form between the viewer and the viewing screen in a society increasingly interdependent on screen-based information and imagery.

Regarding accessing the artworks featured as video stills throughout the thesis, these works are available as moving image and photographic files for review in the documentation archive included to accompany the thesis. Readers are invited to view this archive as accompaniment to the succeeding examples of practical outcomes as they are introduced or discussed in the chapters of this thesis. For ease of access, the moving image and photographic files that comprise the archive are labelled in accordance to their figure number as outlined in the Table of Illustrations located at the end of this text.

Research journey

The origins of this project lie in the experimental artworks generated in the closing stages of my Fine Art Master's degree at Norwich University of the Arts (2014-2015). These works included video artworks and large scale installations, each created with the intention to disrupt habitual encounters with viewing screens, and instead promote a critical reading of the viewing screen itself. These unrefined MA works would serve to outline the territory within which this practice-led doctoral research operates, ultimately shaping the project's aforementioned aims.

The initial focus on this doctoral research was predominantly studio based, taking the opportunity to re-visit the themes and concepts that were tentatively explored in the closing stages of my MA studies. This early experimental studio practice was supplemented by extensive contextual and theoretical research - aligning appropriate artists, literature, theoretical frameworks and concepts alongside the research. These supplementary aspects would often drive practical experiments and lead to further avenues of research as a result of extensive critical appraisal and reflection. Furthermore, artworks generated as part of collaborative experimentation, group exhibition, and residency opportunities each proved crucial in navigating problematic stages of the research at this initial stage. This process of practical experimentation placed greater scrutiny on many of the outstanding questions and reoccurring motifs in the MA works, ultimately identifying the key areas of this practice-led research: the viewing screen's formal qualities, the manner in which viewers engage with the work in terms of movement or mobility, and this research's use of representation on-screen. Furthermore, this continued practical experimentation paved the way for previously unexplored (or as

yet unidentified) aspects of the research to establish themselves, such as aspects of the screen's hidden light as explored in chapter 5 of this thesis.

The research project would reach a critical point in February 2018, when I staged the 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (see discussion on page 68), intended to function as a testing site for the experimental practice developed up to that point. This exhibition featured a refined display of the key parameters developed throughout the initial years of this research's journey, as well as an opportunity to gauge their effectiveness to a range of audiences. The primary result of 'Untitled Research Exhibition' was a deeper insight into the key parameters functioning within the research, and the identification of individual conceptual frameworks which would later form the chapters in this thesis: 'Screen Objecthood', 'Screen and Mobility', 'Problematic Image' and 'The Phenomenological Screen'.

The latter stages of this research project involved the writing-up stage of this thesis, providing a direct outline of supplementary contextual research alongside the experimental studio work undertaken in the opening stages of this doctoral study, as well as outlining the unique conceptual frameworks that have emerged through this research project. The closing stages of the project involved introducing this research to a wider audience at academic conferences such as Anglia Ruskin's annual PhD conference 'THEOREM' (2019) (see discussion on pages 223). This process featured delivering a presentation and receiving critical feedback on the research project, as well as the opportunity to publicly exhibit more conclusive practical outcomes from the research's body of work. This process steered the project to its conclusion, and ultimately aided in concisely shaping the research's contribution to knowledge.

Chapter overview

The aims outlined in the introduction have been met with the development of an experimental body of Fine Art practice and its respective conceptual frameworks. These aspects are explored across the six key chapters of this thesis: **Methodology**, **Screen Objecthood**, **Screen and Mobility**, **Problematic Image**, **The Phenomenological Screen** and **Moving Image Precedents**, with a final summative **Conclusion** closing the text.

The first chapter, **Methodology**, discusses the practice-led methodology employed to reach this research's aims and objectives, as well as the relevant literature that assisted in articulating and shaping this methodological approach. The chapter includes considerations of practice-based versus practice-led methodological approaches, undertaking action research, iterative outcomes in practice, interdisciplinarity, collaboration, generating qualitative and quantitative data, the crucial role of exegesis, as well as the range of technical strategies adopted to generate the project's body of experimental Fine Art practice. This chapter emphasises that by adopting a practice-led methodology that embraces experimentation and iteration, success and failure, and summative reflection in equal measure, the research can effectively explore its core aims and thereby identify its contribution to knowledge.

The second chapter of this thesis, entitled **Screen Objecthood**, makes its priority an appraisal and subsequent promotion of the screen's formal qualities from their typical status as a vessel for image. Key terminology introduced throughout this chapter (and in this case, more consistently throughout the thesis) includes 'screen structure', which refers unilaterally to the screen in and of itself, i.e. the typically rectangular viewing space

on which images and data are displayed or accessed.

Furthermore, the key term defined in this chapter, 'screen objecthood' refers to the precise formal or material attributes that comprise the screen, such as height, width, and depth dimensions, as well as its technical composition, from LED, to LCD and Plasma display. This term is therefore employed to form a clear dichotomy between that which is displayed on the screen, and the screen's material qualities themselves at an early stage of the thesis.

The chapter presents an appraisal of the screen's formal qualities, something that is inherently problematic for the contemporaneous screen viewer. Kate Mondloch states "The screen's objecthood, however, is typically overlooked in daily life: the conventional propensity is to look through media screens and not at them" (Mondloch, 2010: 4).

Screen technologies also provoke a wide spectrum of altered inter-personal and social dimensions, affecting "profoundly the socio-logic, psycho-logic, axio-logic, and even the bio-logic by which we daily live our lives" (Sobchack, 1994: 4). This results in an "electronic presence" (Sobchack, 1994: 24) that continually redefines the way screen users interact with one another and the world around them. Compounding this issue is the fact that the screen operates as a liminal, pervasive, ambiguous object, with its appearance, motive and function fluctuating as a result of this hybridity, "screens beckon, provoke, separate, and seduce" (Mondloch, 2010: 12).

This chapter aligns the research project alongside visual practices that similarly explore these ambiguities of the screen, thereby closing the gap between the viewer and the objecthood of the viewing screen. The emphasis of such practices is the promotion of the

screen from its primary role of an image facilitator to that of a reflexivity between a screen structure and its screened image. In this way, this research proposes that the screen offers a similar role to the traditional painting frame.

Building upon this notion of the screen's resemblance to the internal and external workings of the painting and painting frame, this chapter moves towards challenging the established concepts of 'Erga' (what is within the frame) and 'Parerga' (the frame itself) as outlined in Kant's (1790) *The critique of Judgement*, ultimately aligning with Derrida's concept of the Parergon; the notion that "neither inside nor outside, neither above nor below, it disconcerts any opposition but does not remain indeterminate and it gives rise to the work" (Derrida, 1987: 9). This results in a series of practical works detailing the nature of the screen operating as an ambiguous, paradoxical object that at once mediates, contains, and restricts, amongst other functions. This promotes a critical reading of the viewing screen's objecthood alongside the screened content presented within the screen.

The third chapter, **Screen and Mobility**, details the practical outcomes in the research that incorporate viewer movement, with a view to incentivise a critical mobility in relation to the screen. The mobility engendered in the practice is varied, including typical ambling motions around installed works, structured or optimal viewing positions to attain a sense of coherency between disparate screened images, or in some cases, kinetic experiments wherein the screen's structure gains a perpetual motion.

The key conceptual framework introduced in this chapter to engender a critical re-appraisal of the screen is dubbed 'emancipatory obliquity', a hybridised triangulation of theoretical inputs from Jacques Rancière's (2008) model for viewer emancipation, and

Francois Jullien's (2015) concept of obliqueness.

This term 'emancipatory obliquity' denotes a viewing condition that remains sensitive to the fact that directing a supposed optimal mobility within which to view the research outcomes stultifies the viewer – reinforcing their role as a passive recipient in viewing screen encounters. Instead, the work encourages a holistic mobility that allows viewers to reach a critical obliqueness in relation to the viewing screen-based on their own personal experience. This is most effectively cultivated in this research's outcomes that incentivise a transgressive mobility – a viewing screen encounter that allows viewers to engage with the concealed components of a viewing screen.

The fourth chapter, **Problematic Image**, refers to the difficulty this research has encountered with regards to separating users from engaging with screen imagery over screen structure. Featuring a comprehensive appraisal of the aspects of landscape in this research's visual outcomes, the problematic sense of an implied narrative within these works becomes the key focus of this chapter. The self-styled 'persistent image' conceptual framework serves as counterpoint to the problematic aspect of these works.

The crucial element of the persistent image is its temporal quality—the persistent image operates in perpetuity, persisting endlessly as an independent article aside from the temporal sphere of the viewer. This provokes a sequence of reactions from its viewer—offering first an access point via the screen's image, followed by a scepticism as to the authenticity of this image as it loops in perpetuity, and an anxiousness that comes with the realisation of the image's artificiality. The encounter with the persistent image ends with a summative mourning of this absence of an authentic image, steering the encounter

toward a reparatory engagement with the screen structure itself.

The fifth chapter, **Screen Phenomenology**, presents a phenomenological study of screen viewership, and the notion of its “already there implicit agreement” (Introna & Ilharco, 2004: 311). This refers to the embedded or habitual viewing conditions within which viewers encounter and interact with any given viewer screen. This concept of the ‘already agreed’ pertains to previously unnoticed practical by-products of the research, prompting further points for consideration. For instance, one of these by products is the emission of light from the screen’s aperture that pools around these works — this light exists concurrent to all viewing screen interactions, and it must contribute to the ‘already there implicit agreement’ between the viewer and the viewing screen.

This chapter refers to this phenomenon as the ‘screen as emitter’ because this light emittance is a characteristic of viewing screen interactions that are habitually disregarded or overlooked as by-products of the primary screened image, and in certain screening conditions, concealed. By featuring artworks that aim to make this emitted light visible, viewers begin to critically position themselves towards a presence that ordinarily lies concealed in viewing screen encounters. This critical exposure of a covert light that the viewing screen emits in this research’s works, and a phenomenon that indeed occurs for all screens, is another key aspect of this research.

The sixth chapter, **Moving Image Precedents** features an appraisal of moving image practitioners relevant to this research project. This chapter is designed to further contextualise the outcomes present within this thesis with significant precedents in the field of moving image, specifically video art and expanded cinema.

The final **Conclusion** features a concise summary on each previous chapter in the thesis. This includes key artworks from this project's experimental body of Fine Art practice, key literary and visual contextual references, and the resulting unique conceptual frameworks that have arisen from the research. The final section of this chapter outlines this research's claim to new knowledge — in the interest of clarity, I have also included this as part of this introduction.

This research contributes new knowledge to the field of the visual arts in both the unique critical appraisal and subsequent realignment of the viewing screen engendered by the research's practical outcomes and their exhibition, as well as the proposal for a series of distinctive conceptual frameworks that these works operate within and around, as outlined in the different chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 1: Practice-led research methodology

As this research project is practice-led, precisely defining its methodology at the offset clarifies the project's priorities. Heading the thesis with this methodological chapter acts as the stage upon which each subsequent chapter's practical outcomes operate, permitting in-depth-discussion of practical outcomes in the research without need to frequently substantiate and remind the reader as to the nature of the project's methodological rationale. Staking the claim that this research is practice-led and adopting this methodology has proved to be a complicated, if rewarding process. The breadth of critical discussion regarding practice-led research methodology is expansive, and the numerous literary inputs that have guided and shaped this research's methodological approach require appraisal.

The methodology employed within this research is the result of study into contemporary and historical theoretical positions regarding the nature of practice-led research. Through the alignment and subsequent implementation of these various methodological models, a coherent, theoretically grounded practice-led methodology for this research project establishes itself. It is through such literature that previously unscrutinised aspects of my practical methodology have been refined. Various methodological literature has provoked development within this research's methodological approach, with concepts such as reciprocity between theory and practice, permeations between disciplines and mediums, speculative, experimental, and iterative practical decision making, and the function of the materials employed in this practice all placed under intense scrutiny.

The resulting methodology employed is a decidedly hybridised approach that demonstrates an awareness of the canon of practice-led research models, and most importantly, pushes such methods to generate practical outcomes that address this research project's objectives.

Practice-based vs practice-led research

Making a precise distinction between practice-led research and its affiliated approaches – namely practice-based research – is crucial in order to gain insight into the chosen methodological approach of this research project, and a useful point of orientation to begin this chapter. Precisely categorising doctoral research approaches has been a topic of some debate. Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean in their text, *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, state that “Creative work within the university environment is now often referred to as practice-led research, practice-based research, creative research or practice as research” (Smith and Dean, 2009: 2). Categorising these approaches in such a way results in distinct, yet often interlacing or overlapping methodologies.

Attempting to demonstrate this sense of an overlap between these different terms, Smith and Dean continue by stating that each of these different approaches represent aspects of two core principles for generating research within creative practice. The first principle emphasises the creative practice itself in the context of a research project, or that “creative work in itself is a form of research and generates detectable research outputs” (Smith and Dean, 2009: 5). The second principle denotes that creative insights can be gained through conceptualisation and theorisation following artist's reflection on their

practice – “the training and specialised knowledge that creative practitioners have and the processes they engage in when they are making art – can lead to specialised research insights which can then be generalised and written up as research.” (Smith and Dean, 2009: 5).

These notions are further examined in *Practice Based Research: A Guide*, wherein Linda Candy allocates these two principles specific titles - the first as ‘practice-based research’, or “an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice” (Candy, 2006: 1) and the second as “practice-led research’, or research that “is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice” (Candy, 2006: 1). This binary categorisation proves problematic for Smith and Dean, who instead argue for a looser use of these terms that boasts “a broader view of creative practice which includes not only the artwork but also the surrounding theorisation and documentation” (Smith and Dean, 2006: 5).

Ultimately, Smith and Dean assert that the term ‘practice-led research’ denotes both “the work of art as a form of research and to the creation of the work as generating research insights which might then be documented, theorised and generalised” (Smith and Dean, 2006: 7). Here, the notion of practice-based and practice-led are not so much separate, but instead, “interwoven in an iterative cyclic web” (Smith and Dean 2009: 2). The key concept that Smith and Dean establish is that practice-led research encompasses not only the artworks themselves, but the processes that generate these works, such as the successes and failures that drive critical reflection and further experimentation in practice, or theories and concepts that establish themselves through research.

An application of this approach in a fellow doctoral student's research is present in Nithikul Nimkulrat's article *The Role of Documentation in Practice-Led Research*, where Nimkulrat adopts the practice-led approach moniker for her study after carefully weighing its characteristics against those of practice-based research. Demonstrating the rationale behind this decision, Nimkulrat refers to the UK Council for Graduate Education report's statement that:

The practice-based doctorate advances knowledge partly by means of practice. An original/creative piece of work is included in the submission for examination. It is distinct in that significant aspects of the claim for doctoral characteristics of originality, mastery and contribution to the field are held to be demonstrated through the original creative work. Practice-based doctoral submissions must include a substantial contextualisation of the creative work. This critical appraisal or analysis not only clarifies the basis of the claim for the originality and location of the original work, it also provides the basis for a judgement as to whether general scholarly requirements are met. (Frayling et al., 1997: 14)

This is utilised alongside Anke Couman's definition for practice-led research as possessing several key distinct characteristics:

Within practice-led research it is the design process moving from problem to solution that is the point of departure for the rhetoric research direction of the thesis... The research direction of an artist/designer--other than the art and design process--is a transparent process in which conscious steps are taken, in which knowledge is used, or knowledge is searched for and articulated in the process...

The artist/designer, therefore, must also demonstrate that he [sic] possesses sufficient knowledge to justify the choices he [sic] has made. (pp. 65-66)

Presenting these different approaches allows for Nimkulrat to assert that in “practice-based research, the practitioner’s role may be more dominant than the researcher’s role” and that the crucial distinction for practice-led research is that “the two roles appear to be equally important, because research becomes an intertwined part of practice” (Nimkulrat, 2006: 2). In this way, Nimkulrat’s definition of these two separate approaches to practical research echoes the rhetoric outlined by Smith and Dean. For her, the term practice-led research ultimately denotes an approach that allows for interaction between the various aspects of the research process – the resources and literature engaged with as part of the research, the art practice itself as part of the research, the reflections on that practice, and theoretical or conceptual discussions that emerge through research.

My own research therefore aligns with Nimkulrat and Smith and Dean’s definition of practice-led research’s key characteristics. It is this interplay and the overlap between practice, process, and outcome that situates my research approach as practice-led, as opposed to practice-based. Certainly, some aspects of this research project align with what might be considered as a practice-based methodology. However, the practice generated in this project is one part of this research’s contribution to knowledge. That is to say, the stock of the research’s claim not only lies within the practical outcomes that populate this thesis and their generative processes, but also the unique conceptual frameworks developed as part of this research process. The following subheadings will further elaborate on the supporting literature, and various approaches employed as part of this practice-led methodology.

Practice-led research

Having already specified practice-led research as the primary methodological approach that this project has implemented, a short definition regarding its manner and function would be helpful before proceeding. Carole Gray's assertion of the relationship between research and practice in *Inquiry Through Practice: Developing Appropriate Research Strategies* remains the most pertinent appraisal:

Firstly, research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners (Gray, 1996: 3).

A practice-led research methodology therefore aims "to illuminate or bring about new knowledge and understanding and it results in outputs that may not be text-based, but rather a performance (music, dance, drama), design, film, or exhibition" (Arts and Humanities Research Board, 2003: 10). Practice-led research in the fine art discipline therefore seeks to reach new knowledge or understanding through the continual development and exhibition of fine art practical outcomes. This straightforward definition does not encapsulate the subtleties and nuances of the methods employed within this research, however, and further citation is necessary to adequately quantify the methodology present in this research.

As such, it is important to note that Gray's definition of practice-led research was a term in its infancy at the time, far from an embedded concept within the academic vernacular. Practice-led research was an erstwhile developmental strategy or methodological alternative for researchers constrained within the rigidity of pre-existing PhD research methodologies. Gray states that prior to the development and acknowledgement of the practice-led research model, "completed PhDs in Art & Design were firmly within the research framework and methods of education, art history, and psychology - that is research conducted about (into) the visual arts from an external perspective by educationalists, historians/theoreticians, critics and psychologists - usually not primarily practising artists and designers" (Gray, 1996: 6). Such methodologies were therefore implemented alongside the research undertaken and did not steer or motivate the enquiry in earnest.

The methodological model outlined here would therefore prioritise contextual aspects of the study such as the 'what', 'why', 'when', and 'where' of the research, with the 'how' delegated to a subsequent methodological sub chapter. This sense that the methodological dimension of the research as somehow aside to the practical dimension has proved to be an inefficient, redundant model in the fabric of this doctoral research. The critical role of the practical outcomes in this research has continuously developed and shaped this research project.

Here lies the opportunity that practice-led research offers any given research project, and the utility of such a stance with regards to my own work. Practice-led research stresses that instead of adopting research approaches that "reflect the classic scientific method where the researchable is objectified, and the researcher attempts to remain detached"

(Gray and Malins, 2004: 22), practice-led research offers a more naturalistic inquiry, which places the researcher firmly within the research process, often becoming the key participant in generating research. What such an approach establishes is a context within which the researcher is undertaking their research through action, and subsequently is “reflecting in and on action” (Gray 1996: 4) and thereby producing an ongoing system of critical reflection in relation to his or her research outcomes, ultimately providing an opportunity to outline a subsequent significant contribution to knowledge.

I align myself with practice-led research as it engenders the generation of new knowledge through a series of critically reflected practical outcomes. An ongoing process of practice-led inquiry, with each work guiding further avenues of research or practical experimentation, rigorously interrogated through personal reflective accounts, as well as qualitative feedback garnered through critique becomes the site for generating research outcomes and achieving this research’s aims. With the notional practice-led research model established as per Gray’s literature, the next logical step is to further refine this research’s own practice-led methodology with relevant literary inputs.

Gray’s collaborative text with Julian Malins, *Visualising Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design* (Gray and Malins, 2004) presents the opportunity to further quantify this research’s methodology. This text is one example of the steady development of practice-led research methodologies, providing key distinctions and terminologies that help articulate the research methodology operating at the centre of this research further. *Visualising Research* engenders an introduction (or demystification) of various practice-led research methodologies, as well as the landscape within which these methodologies operate across the interdisciplinary field of art and design research. These methodological

approaches are subject to critical appraisal, and an expected standard to which they must operate arises.

The breadth and detail of the work undertaken in *Visualising Research* allows for a certain retrospective reflection on this research's formative methodology, provoking a critical interrogation on long embedded behaviours in my own practice. The habitual, almost autonomous process of producing work, and subsequent critical reflection in the form of reflective journaling, informed by qualitative feedback from viewers were methodological strategies that were not yet addressed in the early stages of this research. Locating and analysing these processes through the lens of Malins and Gray's literature allows for the development of key subcategories and sub strategies both consciously and subconsciously adopted as part of this research's practice-led methodology.

Action research, iterative outcomes

One such methodological strategy in *Visualising Research* is the concept of action research – defined as research that involves "intervening, diagnosing and solving a problem in a specific real-world context" (Gray and Malins, 2004: 74) and that requires the co-operation of the "inhabitants/participants of the potential action context, and is self-evaluative with modifications ongoing, where the application of the results is part of the methodology. Its aim is ultimately to improve the practice in some way" (Ibid.).

Action research therefore establishes itself as "a method of qualitative research the purpose of which is to engage in problem solving, through a cyclical process of thinking, acting, data gathering and reflection" (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013: 245). This methodological approach resounded with the work undertaken in the research at the

time – practical experimentation, practical exhibition, feedback and subsequent reflection attempt to continually improve the quality of the practice outcomes with suitable modifications made. Conducting action research therefore presents the experimental practice-led test site within which this research might offer a solution to the overarching aims of a critical re-alignment and re-appraisal of the viewing screen.

A crucial distinction regarding this research's practice-led methodology is through an alignment with this notion of action research – the practice itself is iterative. Producing many versions of one work often allows for a spectrum of results to present themselves. Here lies the moment that critical discourse, reflection, and qualitative feedback shape further outcomes, which themselves lead to further discoveries and further iterations. Often the work in question may adjust very fine details such as the behaviour of a presented image, or stage different installations of the same work. It is within an iterative methodology that this research outlines its successes and failures, so promoting its continued development. Outlining this iterative, action research approach as a key component of my practice-led research methodology not only quantifies some of the established approaches to work making, but also broadened this research's methodological resources, leading towards texts that implemented speculative and experimental work making as their primary concern.

Material thinking, speculation

Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt's *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* provides an omnibus of practice-led methodologies and their applications across several interdisciplinary case studies, including performance, fine art, design, video, and

writing projects. It is this sense of interdisciplinarity at the crux of the text that allows it to establish itself as a particularly fertile document, offering oblique appraisals and hybrid approaches to creative methodologies that have further clarified this research's own practice-led research methodology.

Bolt's chapter 'The Magic is in the Handling' is one particularly important point of reference. The citation of Paul Carter, and his text, *Material Thinking: The Theory and Practice of Creative Research* is the key component in this chapter. Material thinking surmises that materials and tools that an artist employs possess an intelligence of sorts that coalesces with an artist's own intelligence. The materials themselves inherently inform the decision making and subsequent dissemination of the topic. Bolt substantiates this notion with the simple statement that "Material thinking is the logic of practice" (Bolt, 2007: 30).

Bolt also ascertains the validity of a speculative, material-led practice with regards to the contribution of new knowledge in an academic context. She states that contributions to new knowledge can only be wrought from the handling of materials, methods, tools and ideas of practice: "it is not just the presentation of an already formed idea nor is it achieved through conscious attempts to be original" (ibid.).

Here the writing posits that originality cannot be sought out in premeditated work making. Instead, Bolt suggests that the new knowledge is instead located in "dealings with the tools and materials of production and in our handling of ideas, rather than a self-conscious attempt at transgression" (Bolt, 2007: 31). This challenges the notion that materials and process are used in the service of research and not research-generating

instruments in their own right. Bolt counters such a position, instead arguing that the material productivity from which an artwork emerges is itself creative arts research: “It is much more concerned with articulating what has emerged or what has been realised through the process of handling materials and ideas, and what this emergent knowledge brings to bear on the discipline” (Bolt, 2007: 34).

It is at this point that drawing on Bolt’s concepts within ‘The Magic is in the Handling’ against this research’s methodological approach proves insightful. In the fabric of this research, critical moments of success have been the result of a speculative practice-led approach to making. In such practical experiments, where the motivation is speculation, testing, or an experimental approach to making, unforeseen or unanticipated aspects can occur, something also supported by Bolt in her text *The Exegesis and the Shock of the New* which will be referenced at a later stage of this chapter.

Additionally, Bolt’s suggestion that a pre-meditated attempt to accomplish originality is flawed is pertinent here. Often, the practical outcomes generated in the research that operate from presumption, or from an attempt to somehow aim for the delivery of theoretical concepts within a practical outcome, frequently failed to align with this research’s aims.

This research therefore aligns with Bolt’s theory of methodology, advocating the generation of practice in a state of material thinking, centred on speculative, experimental methodological gestures in both video and installation mediums in order to continually develop the research. Examples of this speculative approach will situate themselves throughout the remainder of this thesis.

Interdisciplinary methodology

As a practitioner that experiments in both the mediums of video and installation, Dianne Reid's *Cutting Choreography: Back and Forth Between 12 Stages and 27 Seconds*, is particularly helpful in quantifying the relationship these two disciplines have with one another in the fabric of this research. Reid presents an account of a transition of sorts in her work, from an established practice as a dance choreographer to a video practice. The text adopts a structure of 12 stages chronicling the complexities of this inter disciplinary-move. According to Reid, this foray into interdisciplinary practice allows for the "unlearning" (Reid, 2007: 50) of certain tropes and established practice methodologies. This process of unlearning is, according to Reid, the point at which methodologies, and potentially their outcomes, can become further developed.

What unfurls across this chapter are the complications of Reid moving from what she considers her primary practice of dance performance, to another discipline she considers herself less familiar with: video art. And yet, the benefits of such a transition between disciplines provides the opportunity for unexpected practical discoveries. Reid states that "rather than having to demand extreme virtuosity of my performers [I] can have a direct link to my audience and, in a sense, can elicit responses via my performance in the editing suite" (Reid, 2007: 50). This acknowledges the benefits of translating aspects between two disparate practices, allowing one to supplement the other.

Reid's text therefore spoke to the transition between the two contributing mediums in this practice-led research, video and installation. What became clear in the wake of studying Reid's work was a sense of reciprocity between these two mediums. Instances of

critical feedback as to successes (spatial, temporal, etc.) of certain video works would later be translated to installation works, and vice versa. Here, aspects of the works could be amplified or reduced by this inter-disciplinary approach, dramatically affecting their ability to address this research's objectives or not. It is in this acknowledgement of the idea of a reflexivity between methodological resources that another key distinction in my practice-led research methodology establishes itself: remaining sensitive to the advantages and disadvantages presented by permeations between the disciplines adopted in this research.

Hybridity

The manner in which Reid's interdisciplinary methodology influenced and quantified elements of this practice-led research has provoked further reconsiderations as to the nature of hybrid methodological approaches. Referring once more to *Gray's Inquiry Through Practice*, a common theme permeates the text, offering discourse with regards to a growing sense of hybridity in the role of the practitioner-researcher. Gray notes that "if the practitioner is also the researcher tensions arise in the apparent duality of the role - subjectivity versus objectivity, internal versus external, doing versus thinking and writing, intuition versus logic" (Gray 1996: 7). Furthermore, Gray emphasises the amorphous, hybrid stance that practice-led researchers can occupy in her simple statement that the "practitioner-researcher does not wear two alternate hats, but one hat which integrates or at least allows difference to co-exist". What Gray is exploring here is the now commonly discussed notion of hybridity in research methodology. Certainly, this hybridity is present within my own research, the understanding that each decision or development made with regard to either practical or textual research overlaps, cross pollinates and influences

further avenues of research or discovery. There are no strict lines between visual or textual elements of the research, and as such I make the case that this research employs a hybridised practice-led research methodology to meet its aims.

This notion of a hybridised methodological approach is discussed in great length by Mieke Bal in her text *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*. Making its central concern the development and quantification of hybridised research methodologies, *Travelling Concepts* also provides an analysis of approaches to research that rely on practical and theoretical study in equal measure. The key aspect outlined by Bal here is a permeation, or reciprocity between practical and textual research elements.

This sense of reciprocation is perhaps most succinctly described with the statement: “Only practice can pronounce on theoretical validity, yet without theoretical validity no practice can be evaluated” (Bal, 2002: 14). The two are not mutually exclusive – when drawn together they shape and guide further research in each respective field. For Bal, this reciprocation is a nebulous affair, stating that as theory travels between practice, “a negotiation, a transformation, a reassessment is needed at each stage” (Bal, 2002: 39).

The text’s third chapter, ‘Mise-en-scène’ demonstrates this notion. In this section, the theatrical concept of *mise-en-scène* is utilised as a theoretical concept for cultural analysis. For Bal, the manner in which of *mise-en-scène* travels across these disciplines is a key example of the benefits of a hybridised methodological approach, stating that as the concept moves from a theatrical practice to academic analysis it becomes “enriched with theoretical elements drawn from provisional conflation of *mise-en-scène*, as an elaborate and highly sophisticated artistic practice, with dreams as unconscious happenings” (Bal,

2002: 112). Here, Bal outlines what first appears as subject specific theory, noting the merits of its continued application across other disciplines. As this concept travels between disciplines, it offers unique insights to the context within which it is applied: “Now, with its accumulated baggage, it will travel to an artistic practice of an entirely different kind... a practice where no human actors occupy centre stage, and where things, mute but really not so mute, do the work of meaning production” (Ibid.).

The travel that this *mise-en-scène* concept undertakes in Bal’s text offers a unique methodological model in the context of this research’s own methodology. Allowing theory to permeate practical work and vice-versa incites an amalgamation of sorts between otherwise disparate disciplines. Here researched concepts and research discoveries synthesise with one another, guiding further advancements. Bal’s work extends the notion that my textual and visual research reciprocate one another, amalgamating past findings and guiding further research, producing a decidedly hybridised methodology. This is particularly true for theory that might not be read as intrinsically linked or situated within fine art practice. Indeed, this is an element operating in my own work, particularly in relation to the application of Brecht’s performative theory in my video and installation works, as explored in chapter 4 ‘The Problematic Image’.

Writing

This chapter cannot be completed without referring to the integral role that written reflective work has had as part of the methodology steering developments in the research. This research’s written aspects serve as a key critical tool to supplement its ongoing practice-led research outcomes in the form of critical reflections, short written

articles, or conference papers.

The subject of writing as accessory to, or supplementary to, undergraduate and postgraduate fine arts practice is often scrutinised in the literary field. Two resources help position the role of writing as part of this practice-led research methodology: Barbara Kamler and Pat Thompson's *Helping Doctoral Students Write: Pedagogies for Supervision*, and Gray's *Practice as Research*.

Helping Doctoral Students Write begins with re-arranging a series of common misconceptions with regards to doctoral writing. Here the stage at which research students go about recording and reflecting upon their research findings in writing is interrogated. The text proposes that the term 'writing-up' is in fact "ancillary or marginal to the real work of research" (Kamler and Thompson, 2006: 3). Kamler and Thompson therefore argue against the common misconception that the written aspect of a doctorate is a formality used to summarise findings from research ventures. They instead "seek to offer an alternative, more theorized approach based on current understandings of writing, identity, and social practice" to this misconception regarding the supposed summative function of writing practice as part of doctoral research.

Kamler and Thompson instead favour a progressive shift towards writing as "both natural and invisible" (Kamler and Thompson, 2006: 4) in the research process. Here, it is argued that writing is an integral aspect of any practice-led research methodology: "We write to work out what we think. It's not that we do the research and then know. It's that we write our way to understanding through analysis". The sentiment here proposes that the written processes operating in tandem with practice-led research, from informal reflective

notes or written articles generated with the purpose of wider public consumption, are all crucial aspects guiding the practice-led research methodology.

Exegesis

With this clearer sense of the misconception of a supposed dichotomy between research and writing as part of practice-led research, a more suitable, reciprocal relationship between written and visual elements of research begins to present itself. Barbara Bolt's *The Magic is in the Handling* provides a poignant case study for the integral role of a written practice alongside the visual. Nearing the mid-point of the text, Bolt presents her own practice as site for a crucial deliberation: here the artist reflects upon an ill-fated attempt at an observational painting of an Australian landscape, stating "what was as significant, was the movement in conceptual thought resulting from this failure to realise a painting. Here, writing became the critical vehicle through which to articulate and disseminate an alternative conception that emerged from this failure" (Bolt, 2007: 33).

In *The Exegesis and the Shock of the New*, Bolt proposes that written critical reflection, or 'exegesis', is itself a critical component of the practice-led research. For Bolt, the exegesis is "concerned with those realizations that emerge out of the chaos of practice. The task of the exegesis is to produce movement in thought itself" (Bolt, 2004). In the case of her own painting, Bolt's exegesis became a critical tool for reflecting on, and providing a trajectory out of a practical outcome that would have been otherwise considered a failure. In her own words, "Through the exegetic form, I was able to develop an argument for a performative understanding of art" (Bolt, 2007: 33) in this way the exegesis "becomes theory generating".

Bolt's exegesis therefore is a mode of analysis and critical reflection that quantifies the unforeseen, problematic, or chaotic aspects of practice-led research. Bolt stresses that contributions to new knowledge can present themselves within unplanned moments in practice, just as likely to arise from moments of failure as success, and that "the task of the creative exegesis is to extend on existing domains of knowledge through its reflection on these 'shocking realizations'" (Bolt, 2007). The exegesis therefore presents a solution, or counterpoint to the dichotomy between visual and written research presented and challenged by Kamler and Thompson. The role of the exegesis as supplement to practice-led research is a dynamic, intrinsic, and generative one, providing traction for further development on any practical decision or outcome.

The reflective writing practice operating alongside the practical outcomes in this research shares many of the characteristics of Bolt's exegesis: a constantly shifting, speculative process, seeking to develop the practice through a steady process of critical reflection. It exists as a steady (or, in Kamler and Thompson's terms, 'invisible') undercurrent of critical thought that seeks the enhancement of every aspect of the research. The exegesis therefore comprises another aspect of this research's hybridised practice-led methodology. The practical outcomes that lead this research would neither develop or align with this research's aims, nor indeed exist in earnest, without the crucial critical role that exegesis provides.

Qualitative and quantitative feedback

As mentioned previously, and a key aspect of this research's methodology, is the gathering of qualitative and quantitative feedback from a variety of audiences, both specialist and

non-specialist. This is best exemplified in the exhibition of works across various contexts, such as one of this research's practical outcomes entitled 'Västerås Slip' (2016). This work has been exhibited in three locations to a variety of audiences: firstly, as part of a curated collaborative project entitled 'Constellation' (2016) featuring staff and Masters graduates from Norwich University of the Arts and The Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam. Secondly at Grimsby's annual 'Lightworks' (2016) group show, and lastly as part of the 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018) at Norwich University of the Arts. The varying contexts within which this work has been displayed have provided the opportunity to engage with a series of viewers, offering a range of critical observations and feedback.

In the instance of 'Constellation', beyond the notion of a dialogic exchange between the two institutions and respective student and staff demographics, this was one of the higher profile opportunities for this research to engage with the public, or the notional 'viewer'. This was a marked difference from the astute critical appraisal offered by the fine art teaching staff and postgraduate community when the work was displayed within the 'Untitled Research Exhibition'.

The ongoing critical feedback received regarding this practice-led research in critiques, tutorials, group discussions, conferences and assessments has continuously informed the development of the work. Emphasising that this research has been exposed to a variety of viewers and the respective criticality allows for a keener sense of what the practical outcomes are actually achieving, and whether they successfully address the research's aims. This aspect of qualitative and quantitative data collection therefore presents itself as another key component of this practice-led research methodology.

Collaboration

A brief discussion of the collaborative nature of some of the works undertaken as part of this research are useful in this methodological chapter. Whilst the outcomes of these interactions with other practitioners will be explored in greater detail in appropriate chapters, the effect these encounters had with regards to my practice-led research methodology is noteworthy. The notion of the value of collaborative exchanges in visual arts explored in the aforementioned resource, *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Smith and Dean initially provoked interest in this methodological approach by stating collaboration in visual arts research could lead to “the enhanced possibility of hybrid intermedia outputs” (Smith and Dean, 2009: 24). Indeed, in the experience of undertaking collaborative research, outcomes have often served to further the development of this research in unexpected fashions. Collaborative works generated a site within which to push, limit, or indulge in aspects of my methodology, and to expose this research to the methods of other researchers in a speculative, experimental environment. Working with artists specializing in disciplines such as architecture or photography provided further fertile outcomes when placed alongside this research’s primary output of video and installation works.

Technical specifications

Given the experimental, iterative nature of the artwork generated throughout this practice-led research, and the high number of these works featured within this thesis, clarifying the technical specifications and the production processes of these works is useful. This short overview will include the filming apparatus employed, as well as the

software used in the post-production process to generate the digital aspects of the research's outcomes. Furthermore, information regarding the fabrication of physical aspects of these works will also be detailed. It is important to note that unless otherwise stated in this thesis, the following specifications are the technical approaches used to generate all the works in this research project.

Hardware

In terms of the equipment that captured the moving image aspects of this practice-led research, outcomes were generated on a range of filming apparatus. One important aspect to note is that all moving image works generated are digital in their make-up without exception, and therefore none of these works involved the use of analogue filming apparatus.

The filming apparatus employed in this project therefore included DSLR cameras, specifically the Cannon 600D and 750D, as well as numerous handheld mobile phone devices, including various iPhone, Windows and Samsung Galaxy models. By employing this range of filming technologies, raw video footage featured varying characteristics, in terms of scale, resolution, and frames per second. The flexibility offered by these handheld devices emboldened the sense of an experimental, iterative practice-led research approach to work making, enabling a greater degree of spontaneity than some of the more pre-meditated filming approaches featured in this research's body of work.

Other key technical aspects of this research's outcomes include the apparatus used to display the works. In the spirit of an experimental approach to practice-led research,

these devices were as varied as the apparatus employed to capture the works, including a range of digital screens such as HD LCD and plasma televisions, mobile devices, tablets, LCD touch screens, and HD projectors, each comprising various resolutions and scales. In terms of their exhibition, initially works would be installed with the intention of operating on a self-sustaining loop, achieved via USB or SD card multimedia players with HDMI outputs, or in-built media player functions available as factory standard in some HD televisions. Works generated in the final stages of the research project built upon this aspect of a seamless loop for exhibition by incorporating coded display commands on media devices such as the Raspberry Pi 3:

```
"omxplayer -o local --no-osd --loop --aspect-mode fill /home/pi/Videos/Birds.mp4"
```

(Example of coding command employed for 'Birds' (2016) (Figs. 79 and 80))

Incorporating this range of devices into the practice-led research developed a keener sense of the most appropriate technology for public exhibition, as well generating a body of work that experimented with these different display devices.

Software

As indicated earlier, the post-production stage of the works generated as part of this practice-led research is another crucial aspect to note. The research's body of work has been entirely generated using Adobe Premiere Pro and Adobe After Effects editing programmes. This software offered the opportunity to experiment with various distortions and effects alongside captured digital footage. The range of visual and temporal tools offered by these programmes provided the backbone for the experimental

iterative practice-led methodology that this research employs. This is largely owed to the fact that these distortions and editing tools might be employed to the same piece of raw footage several dozens of times, allowing for adjustments in the minutiae for the final rendered outcome. Furthermore, distorted outcomes could also be re-introduced to the software and manipulated further. For more detail on this critical process of the practice-led research methodology, please refer to the attached appendix, which features screenshots of the timelines of key artworks.

Fabrication

In addition to the hardware and software employed to generate artworks, workshop-based fabrication began to take a more significant role in the latter stages of this research project. This included rudimentary plinth building for experimentation or exhibition, as well as most predominantly, the fabrication of wooden enclosures used to conceal aspects of the screening technologies (see Figs. 32 -34 as part of 'Corridor' (2018) and Figs. 9-11 'Nimbus' (2018)) and facilitate wall mounting of smaller screening devices.

Whilst this is an aspect of the technical makeup of the works that should be acknowledged, construction plans or sketches will not feature in this appraisal as the fabrication in question was completed in informal conversation with technicians internal and external to the Norwich University of the Arts 3D workshop team. After dimensions were taken from the screen in question, discussion would be had regarding the best way to safely contain the device within the fabricated enclosure, and construction would begin. These enclosures were all constructed from plywood, featuring a frontal aperture and a removable back panel to allow for removal of the screening device, and to facilitate

attachment of appropriate wall fixings. It is through experimentation with installation of these various fabricated enclosures that many of the most successful artworks were established.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to provide some degree of insight into the methods employed in this practice-led research. This is itself a result of the study of various theoretical inputs on the nature of practice-led research. By demonstrating the way that this research's methodology operates around or appropriates aspects of this theoretical discourse, a clearer understanding of my methodology is established.

In summary, this research investigation is realised through a body of practice-led action research (Gray and Malins, 2004). The works are therefore experimental, focusing on an iterative output in order to critically engage with success and failures throughout the project. Qualitative data was gathered by means of exhibitions, as well as presentations of research in progress at suitable conferences and critiques. This generated a spectrum of responses from specialist and non-specialist audiences and provided a basis for further experimentation and development of my practice.

The practice-led research equally employs speculative and material-led making processes. It is within this framework that iterative works have been generated - works that re-frame previously used footage for a broad spectrum of results, including incidental or unforeseen moments in practice. Critical reflection on such works takes the form of a reflective writing practice that documented the different stages of the project. This

process in turn provided the necessary exegesis for development through written reflection, ensuring coherency of the project alongside critical feedback received from the work's viewers, and the projects' outlined objectives and aims. The relationship between the disciplines that contribute to my practice is another reciprocal process. Discoveries from one discipline often find themselves filtered into another discipline, providing a hybridised research methodology.

Lastly, contextual and theoretical research therefore, in equal parts, lead and supplemented the practice enquiry. This approach to methodology identified the dynamic relationship between textual and practice-led research outcomes, ensuring they reciprocated or permeated one another. This hybridization of theoretical and practical concepts engendered an amalgamation of prior research that continuously informed further decision making in the project. It is by adopting a methodology that embraces experimentation, iteration, success, failure, and reflection that this research has effectively explored its objectives. By acknowledging both the missteps in the research, as well as positive outcomes, an effective mapping of the trajectory of the practice-led research towards a meaningful resolution at the end of my research study could be possible.

Chapter 2: Screen Objecthood

Range

The nascent stages of this research project, and indeed the studies and works generated prior to this doctoral study, often sought to unpack the complex notion of screen objecthood. In many ways, the exploration of this strand of the research serves as the precursor and gateway to numerous other thematic areas. Allotting each thematic strand of this research its own chapter also establishes a sense of the trajectory of the project from formal, material or objective concerns to those of the user/screen interface, spatial encounters with the viewing screen and finally to the ephemeral, immaterial, and the phenomenological qualities of the screen.

The literature focused on theories of screen is varied, located within an assortment of academic fields, with the technological, social and ethical parameters of screen use often subject to particular scrutiny, providing several fertile areas of discourse. All of these sources affirm one thing for certain: that omnipotent screen technologies in the everyday carry with them certain complications, namely, that the viewer fails to engage with the objecthood of the viewing screen.

Establishing the viewer's critical attitude regarding this objecthood is a key component in seeking a critical re-alignment of the viewing screen: closing the gap between the viewer and the objecthood of the screen aims to provoke a critical relationship to what would otherwise be considered as a passive vessel for the screen's content. Part of the problem with appraising screen objecthood is the ambiguous nature of the screen itself. Exploring

such a notion becomes compounded upon the realisation that a 'screen' may not necessarily refer to the contemporary understanding of the screen as a moving image-centred viewing space. Certainly, its contemporary use presumes the portrayal of a digital or moving image, perhaps integrating an element of user interactivity. However, this contemporary understanding of the screen is the result of a series of mappable historical technological developments. The term therefore permeates visual arts practice in a multitude of manners, from appropriation in sculptural works to its formal subversion as a form of cinematic critique; the screen thus asserts its liminality in a variety of creative contexts.

Locating the objecthood of the viewing screen with these notions in mind therefore requires a degree of pragmatism. What becomes clear is the need to adequately explore the breadth of terminology and theory regarding the screen's status as an ambiguous object, and to present a cohesive theoretical framework within which this practice-led research can operate. This chapter therefore initially interrogates, and then triangulates, the relevant theoretical models around the experimental, iterative artworks generated throughout the course of my research that emphasise the concept of the viewing screen's objecthood.

Electronic presence

Reaching this critical position in regard to the objecthood of the viewing screen is not simple to achieve. Kate Mondloch states "The screen's objecthood, however, is typically overlooked in daily life: the conventional propensity is to look *through* media screens and not *at* them" (Mondloch, 2010: 4). The result is a systematic distancing of the viewer's

engagement with the ubiquitous formal presence of the viewing screen.

Forming a critical relationship between the contemporary screen viewer and the objecthood of the screen is complicated further with the addition of Vivian Sobchack's text, *The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic 'presence'*. The text identifies the culturally-pervasive nature of the viewing screen and its subsequent deep synthesis into everyday behaviours, outlining the effects and, indeed, dangers of this synthesis. Above all, Sobchack ascertains an inextricable link between omnipresent screen technologies that "have now become naturalized and transparent" (Sobchack, 2005: 1) and a burgeoning sense of societal behavioural alteration that is the result of this transparency.

For Sobchack, it is the indiscriminate nature of screen technology that is key in this cause and effect scenario. That is to say, Sobchack proposes that screens "belong not merely to scientists or doctors or an educated elite, but to all of us – and all of the time". The scope of their use and subsequent influence is thus not limited to any single demographic. As democratic as this may seem, Sobchack reiterates that this parity results in pervasive technologies that alter traditional modes of societal interaction, proposing that "screens differently solicit and shape our presence to the world, our representation in it, and our sensibilities and responsibilities about it. Each differently and objectively alters our subjectivity while each invites our complicity in formulating space, time, and bodily investment as significant personal and social experience" (Sobchack, 2005: 2).

Here lies Sobchack's primary concern: this investment into screen technologies produces a wide spectrum of altered inter-personal and social dimensions, affecting "profoundly the socio-logic, psycho-logic, axio-logic, and even the bio-logic by which we daily live our

lives” (Sobchack, 2005: 4). In short, omnipresent screening technologies have altered, or mediated the manner in which users interact with one another, and the world around them, and as a direct consequence “have transformed us so that we presently see, sense, and make sense of ourselves as quite other than we were before each of them existed” (Sobchack, 2005: 5).

Sobchack’s critique continues to explore this thought from a phenomenological perspective, differentiating this mass cultural pervasion of screen technologies from other modes of screen viewership, such as the cinematic, here represented as an affirmation of an “embodied being of consciousness as it materially and intentionally engages the substantial world” (Sobchack, 2005: 26). Instead, the foreboding notion that the “electronic presence” (Sobchack, 2005: 24) offered by the non-hierarchical, nebulous network of screen technology that compromises the lived everyday has “a tendency to *diffuse* and/or *disembody* the lived body’s material and moral gravity” (Ibid.).

Sobchack makes her own conclusions and warnings regarding this phenomena, proposing that the next logical step for the ongoing relationship between the ubiquitous screen and its user’s reliance comes at the cost of the human body, asserting that the “only possibility for negotiating one’s presence in our electronic lifeworld is to reconfigure the body through disembodiment” (Sobchack, 2005: 28) and that by “devaluing the physically lived body and the concrete materiality of the world [we] are all in danger of soon becoming merely ghosts in the machine” (Ibid.).

Sobchack’s work in no uncertain terms, generates the site for this theme of the practice-led investigation to do its work: ascertaining that omnipresent screens mediate, alter, and

continually redefine the manner in which users interact with one another, and the world around them, leading to a marginalised, automatised mode of viewership that leaves the human body under threat.

Certainly, these cautionary notions have manifested in the forefront of my own art practice and research aims. This research's practical outcomes seek therefore to provoke a critical appraisal of the screen's objecthood within the viewer, as a key component of the overarching aim of a critical re-alignment of the viewing screen.

Ambiguity

To reach this critical relationship between the screen's objecthood and its viewer, a common thread throughout the research must be first addressed: that of the screen's ambiguous nature. A useful example of this ambiguity is the stained-glass practice of Brian Clarke (Fig. 1). Whilst a critical appraisal of most of Clarke's works is not of use here, discussing the terminology employed throughout his practice serves to identify the range of the screen's ambiguities as a whole.

The simple notion that Clarke's sculptural works are widely referred to as 'screens' asserts the liminal space within which the notion of the screen operates. Furthermore, the outcome of these works also must be noted. Certainly, their objecthood as sculptural artworks is a primary component for consideration, but also their resulting filtration and mediation of the surrounding space granted by the screen's stained glass, and their interaction and imposition on their surroundings within their exhibition space. The multitude of possible encounters and interpretations of Clarke's work are intrinsically

linked to its status as a 'screen'. To simplify: the 'screen' can constitute more than its contemporaneous interpretation, and this research acknowledges and utilises this fact. Pursuing this line of enquiry, from a strict appraisal the contemporaneous viewing screen and its associated engagement leads to a series of supplementary theoretical and historical resources that enrich the research enquiry.

Moreover, from a practical standpoint, interrogating the ambiguity offered by the term 'screen', and all its subsequent interpretations, functions, and manifestations led this research's initial practice-led experimentation. At the crux of these ambiguities lies an opportunity, or indeed, the tools required, to generate works that attempt to interrogate and re-evaluate viewers' interaction with and understanding of the screen, and hence to provoke a critical relationship to the otherwise overlooked aspect of its objecthood.



Fig. 1: Brian Clarke, 'Summer Solstice Screens' (2017), stained glass screen, 204 x 252 x 405cm

Historicism

Further quantifying or mapping this ambiguity of the screen proves useful in terms of an exploration of exploring the screen's objecthood. As I have noted, the quantity of literature that covers the screen's ambiguous nature is vast, and therefore suitable theoretical models regarding the liminality of the screen must be established in order to interrogate systems of screen-based viewership and meet this project's research aims.

The first key citation regarding the ambiguity of the screen is Anna Friedberg's text *The Virtual Window: From Albert to Microsoft* (2009). Here, Friedberg maps the advent and development of the viewing screen across historical artistic practices. Citing Renaissance painter Leon Battista Alberti's metaphor that details the rectangular frame of a painting as "an open window (*aperta finestra*) through which the subject to be painted is seen" (Friedberg, 2009: 1), Friedberg notes this statement served as the crucial "underpinning for theories that align the perspective frame with the frame of the photograph and the cinema screen" (Friedberg, 2009: 20).

Continuing into an examination of early photographic practice, specifically the "role of the camera obscura as a scientific instrument and as a device for illusion" (Ibid.). Friedberg notes the correlation between "the camera obscura's relation to techniques of light and magic lantern projection and the emergence of 'screen practices'" (Friedberg, 2009: 20-21). The text moves on to explore the screen's ability to "negotiate the paradoxical relations between mobility and immobility, materiality and immateriality" (Friedberg, 2009: 21) and further to this, the uses of the multiple screen, noting that "computer-based forms of imaging and display began more commonly to fracture screen space into

multiple screens” or a “nested *mise en abyme*” (Friedberg, 2009: 22). Lastly, the text speculates as to the future of screened images in the everyday, proposing a future in which the screen undertakes a total synthesis into viewer perceptual and spatial parameters as a form of “inhabited TV” or a “windows environment” (Friedberg, 2009: 22). Here Friedberg denotes an envisioned future of screen viewership that will require no screen at all, a dissolution of the screen’s objecthood entirely, where images and data will be “uploaded directly, bypassing the eye and optics of vision” (Friedberg, 2009: 244).

What Friedberg’s work allows is a sense of the range of the topic at hand. By travelling through these nuanced notions such as ‘window’, ‘frame’ and ‘screen’ the text collates a long history between viewer, space, perspective and image presented in a prescribed rectangular format. There is a trajectory here – from viewing Alberti’s *aperta finestra* space, to the photographic or projected cinematic image, to *mise en abyme* screens, and beyond even those engrained values to the realm of the screen-less.

A chronology of sorts is therefore introduced in *The Virtual Window*: the contemporaneous screen and its viewership are a historic artefact, the result of a succession of developments of other historical creative practices and viewing phenomena. These various interpretations of the screen assert its liminality: an object with material, restrictive readings as well as immaterial and illusionary readings. These ambiguities allow the screen to permeate across history in various formats, with the viewer’s interaction intrinsically linked to, and mutating with, these respective permeations. With such a rich chronology stressing the amorphous nature of the screen’s formats, roles, refuting simple definition, attempting to precisely locate the screen’s objecthood, let alone provoke a critical viewing relationship towards it, becomes problematic.

Screen ambiguity in visual arts

Kate Mondloch offers models for addressing this problematic dimension of locating and interrogating the objecthood of the screen in her text *Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art*. The crucial contribution Mondloch's text offers in relation to this research is by highlighting the manner in which new media art installations interrogate the viewer-screen paradigm, thereby introducing "a theoretical model for thinking about this pervasive mode of contemporary artistic production" (Mondloch, 2010: xii).

Initially, Mondloch draws upon the assessment offered by Friedberg, coming to the same conclusion that the screen operates as a liminal, pervasive, ambiguous object with its appearance, motive and ultimate effect fluctuating as a result of this hybridity: "Screens themselves ... are decidedly ambivalent objects – illusionist windows and physical, material entities at the same time.... Embellished with luminous images dancing across any number of surfaces, screens beckon, provoke, separate, and seduce" (Ibid.).

Mondloch also validates Friedberg's point that the contemporary understanding, and indeed, mode of interaction with the screen is an amalgamation of various historical visual art forms, stating that "Screen-mediated art viewing existed well before the invention of still or moving photographic media" (Mondloch, 2010, xviii) and therefore that it represents "the latest chapter in a long-standing practice of art production and reception" (Mondloch, 2010: xviii).

Screens also argues that experimental fine art practice can offer the viewer a critical position around these ambiguities of the viewing screen. Mondloch demonstrates this

through a series of case studies, making clear that these appraisals sit as “an alternative way to understand media culture and contemporary visibility” (Mondloch, 2010: xvii) and are not necessarily “inherently oppositional or resistant.” (Ibid.) Perhaps, then, the modus operandi of the text is not so much to offer a solution to the purported distance between the viewer and the viewing screen’s objecthood, nor the body-under-threat paradigm offered by Sobchack, as an ancillary perspective on these notions. By placing these fine art-centred screen reliant practices at the centre of the text, Mondloch allows the visual arts to become the site for exploring alternatives to these issues.

Screens therefore leans towards an “intersection between art history and film and media” (Mondloch, 2010: xv) that offers insight into the chronological map following the development of screen reliant artworks and their respective viewing behaviours as outlined in Friedberg’s text. As she argues, “Screen-reliant installations are not so much a wholesale defection away from the concerns and institutions specific to visual art as they are a provocative fusion of filmic/cinematic (or, more broadly, moving image media) and artistic/sculptural concerns” (Mondloch, 2010: xvi).

‘Interface Matters: Screen-Reliant Installation Art’, the initial chapter of Mondloch’s investigation, establishes a history of video and installation practices within which artists have worked to interrogate this dynamic between viewer, screen, and materiality. This is particularly emphasised in practices from the 1960s and 1970s noted for their “rejection of minimalism, or as Michael Fried preferred to call it in *Art and Objecthood* (1967) ‘literalist’ art” (Mondloch, 2010: 1). Regarding these practices, Mondloch asserts that through “contesting the tenets of formal modernism” these artists “invited viewers to understand the screen – as well as the site and experience of screen spectatorship – as

material” (Mondloch, 2010: 1-2). Such practices result in “Media objects and their viewing regimes literally and figuratively put on display in these sculptural and experiential works of art” (Ibid.).

Perhaps the most useful artwork to cite in regard to this point is Mondloch’s inclusion of Michael Snow’s video installation ‘Two Sides to Every Story’ (1974). Here, the arrangement of the work’s screening apparatus ensures that the two projectors facing opposite ends of the exhibition space transmit their image into a centralised metal screen in the dark gallery space. Either side of this installed screen depicts two separate images: that of the staged narrative (or lack thereof), and ‘the undisguised list of ingredients required for staging the film’s artifice, including the artist/director himself’ (Mondloch, 2010: 14).

Herein lies the key intent of the work, that by allowing uncensored access to the *mise-en-scene* (Mondloch notes that this echoes the manner in which the work itself was shot, adding another layer of materiality and demystification to the work’s parameters) required to stage the work, as well as incorporating viewer movement, Snow permits and encourages the viewer to attain a sense of the artifice (of that which is viewed on the screen) and the actuality (the circumstances that produce that image, the material of the screen itself) of the screen-based image.

This notion is further expressed in the culmination of the series of events unfolding on screen, as the video’s protagonist “returns to the centre and extends her hands as if pressing against a surface, figuratively remaking the plastic sheet qua screen, which symbolically links the immaterial image of the plastic sheet to the real aluminium film

screen/projection plane in the installation” (Mondloch, 2010: 14).

Other observations regarding ‘Two sides to every story’ discuss Snow’s varied techniques employed to meet his structuralist aims. Perhaps most pertinent to aid this chapter’s enquiry is Mondloch’s appraisal that “the screen asserts itself as a sculptural object” by “renouncing its role as a wallflower, refusing to assume its conventional, discrete placement on or near a wall” (Ibid.). This staging of the work, coupled with the movement afforded to the viewer allows for a key structuralist motivation of the work to emerge – the apparent inequality in the perceived depth of screen images, and the “very, very thin” screen surface, or “matière” (Snow, 1998: 23) of the film itself. As Mondloch states, “the slim two-sided projection surface is pivotal in structuring this experience: cinematic illusionism is supported or deconstructed depending on one’s physical placement and point of view” (Mondloch, 2010: 15).

Mondloch establishes that ‘Two sides to every story’ exposes the film screen “as both a cipher – a (non)site for illusionist content - and an object to reckon with in its own right” (Ibid.). That is to say, the work does not divert wholly from the representational trappings of a traditionally cinematic viewing encounter, instead appropriating the viewer’s belief in illusionary deep space in film as a critical tool for constructing a pulsation between the works presented as illusion and as its materiality. The result is a decidedly hybridised outcome: Snow provokes an indeterminacy in the viewer in this work – a staging that simultaneously collapses aspects of the interior of the screen, into those that are typically considered exterior, confronting the viewer with the essential objecthood of the screen that delivers the viewed image. Mondloch supports this notion when she writes that “in watching the onscreen narrative unfold, Snow’s viewers are fully convinced of the virtual

windows “interior” space even while they are unremittingly reminded of its staged constructedness, confronted with its logical impossibility” (Mondloch, 2010: 18).

To simplify, ‘Two sides to every story’ engages with systems of habitual screen viewership and the routine of looking into or through that which is presented, and the subsequent invisibility of the material form or surroundings of the viewing screen delivering these images. It is the promotion of these typically ignored formal aspects of the viewing screen into the consideration of the viewer that brings the objecthood of the screen to the foreground.

One iterative series of early video works exemplify this line of enquiry regarding the screen’s ambiguous nature and promoting a sense of its objecthood to the viewer. These works featured an observational image of a high street in central Norwich, subject to digital distortion as a means of disrupting sequences of everyday urban landscapes. The range of these disruptions is wide – some featuring dramatic ruptures in temporal and spatial parameters, depicting cascades of water or total absences or blockages of image, such as in the work ‘waterfall 3’ (2014) (Fig. 2).

It is the outcome in this series of experiments entitled ‘Inaccessible’ (2014) (Fig. 3) that is of particular note, however. This work sculpts the screen’s surface to employ a zone of the image within which depicted representation does not function, with trajectories of figures within the image becoming stilted and paused, only to be resumed as they pass through this zone. In many ways, these segments of materiality restricting the sequence depicted in the image cite Mondloch and Snow’s reflections upon the screen’s objecthood: allowing a section of the screen to act as a physical barrier, or restrictive measure in relation to the

sequence of events portrayed in the image, emphasises the work's objecthood to the viewer. This notion is compounded further as the section of the work operating as an exclusionary, preventative device is embossed, its surface extruding from the surface of the image as if to emphasise its objecthood and materiality. In this way the work aligns with Snow's experiments with the screen surface, or 'matière', as the notion of a uniform screen surface presented in 'Inaccessible' is manipulated, emphasising the sense of its objecthood.



Fig. 2: James Quinn, 'waterfall 3' (2014), video



Fig. 3: James Quinn, 'Inaccessible' (2014), video Installation

Interior, exterior, frame

The structural provocations explored within Snow's work and my research's own experimental outcomes provoke further thought as to what is considered interior and exterior in visual arts practices. Investigating the relationship between the frame of a work and its content presents further opportunity to examine the notion of screen objecthood.

Many pre-20th century paintings sought to provide structural extensions of the rectangular painting space to supplement the framed image. Works such as Jan van Eyck's 'Ghent Altarpiece' (1432) (Fig. 4) and Giovanni Bellini's 'San Zaccaria Altarpiece' (1505) exemplify this notion. In these examples, structural details on the painting frame comment on the figures depicted therein. Indeed, emphasising the frame of a work allowed artists to distance the viewer from the scene by "calling attention to the separation of the image from the viewer's space" (Kleiner, 2014: 543). This bending of the authoritative notion of the frame of an artwork, or that which is considered interior or exterior, is something similarly explored throughout painting practices in the 20th century.



Fig. 4: Jan van Eyck, 'Ghent Altarpiece (open)' (1432), oil on wood, Saint Bavo Cathedral, Ghent, Belgium

Edward S. Casey attributes the motivation for such practices as a challenge to the supposed unilateral function of the picture frame, stating that the misconception is that the “frame represents a disconnect between the artwork for which it serves as a frame and its immediate environs”. The picture frame typically enforces “a spatial arrest between the pictorial (the represented or expressed) and the actual (the literally seen, the physically constructed)” and that in this sense the traditional role of the frame is to break “the spell into which aesthetic experience puts us, as if to say: *the magic stops here*” (Casey, 2017: 102).

Casey instead presents a series of artworks that make clear their rebuttal of this sense of a clear dichotomy between the representation within an artwork and the frame that delivers this representation. Howard Hodgkin’s painting ‘Like an Open Book’ (1989-1990) (Fig. 5) is one such example of a work that extends beyond the typical space reserved for portraying representation, to the framing structure surrounding this area.

As established previously, the conventional propensity to look *through* media screens and not *at* their objecthood aligns the typical role of the screen to that of the often-overlooked painting frame as outlined by Casey. What occurs here is that the screen and the painting frame begin to share characteristics – traditionally ancillary to the encounter with the artwork, both are somehow vessel-like in their manifestation of image or content.



Fig. 5: Howard Hodgkin, 'Like an Open Book' (1989-1990), painting

Stanley Cavell establishes the intrinsic link between the viewing screen and the frame in his text *The world viewed reflections on the ontology of film* (1979), asserting that “The screen is a frame; the frame is the whole field of the screen - as a frame of film is the whole field of a photograph, like the frame of a loom or a house. In this sense, the screen-frame is a mold, or form” (Cavell, 1979: 25).

It is by binding these two concepts of the painting frame with “its being neither/nor (neither painting nor nonpainting) while also being both/and (painting and nonpainting)” (Casey, 2017: 103) and the viewing screen’s liminal, ambiguous nature that becomes a useful site for practice-led research. Exploring concepts of the screen’s objecthood by interrogating its role as a ‘frame’ for screened image and lobbying for a deconstruction of the screen-as-frame’s tacit structural (but crucial) function as explored in painting practises such as Hodgkin’s, catalyses further practical outcomes in this research.

This notion is explored with the work entitled ‘sky waterfall’ (2014) (Fig. 6) in which the projection of the work sits upon a series of different framing surfaces. These framing surfaces ultimately provide an angle that exaggerates the motion at which the projection operates, allowing it to ‘flow’ out into the exhibition space.

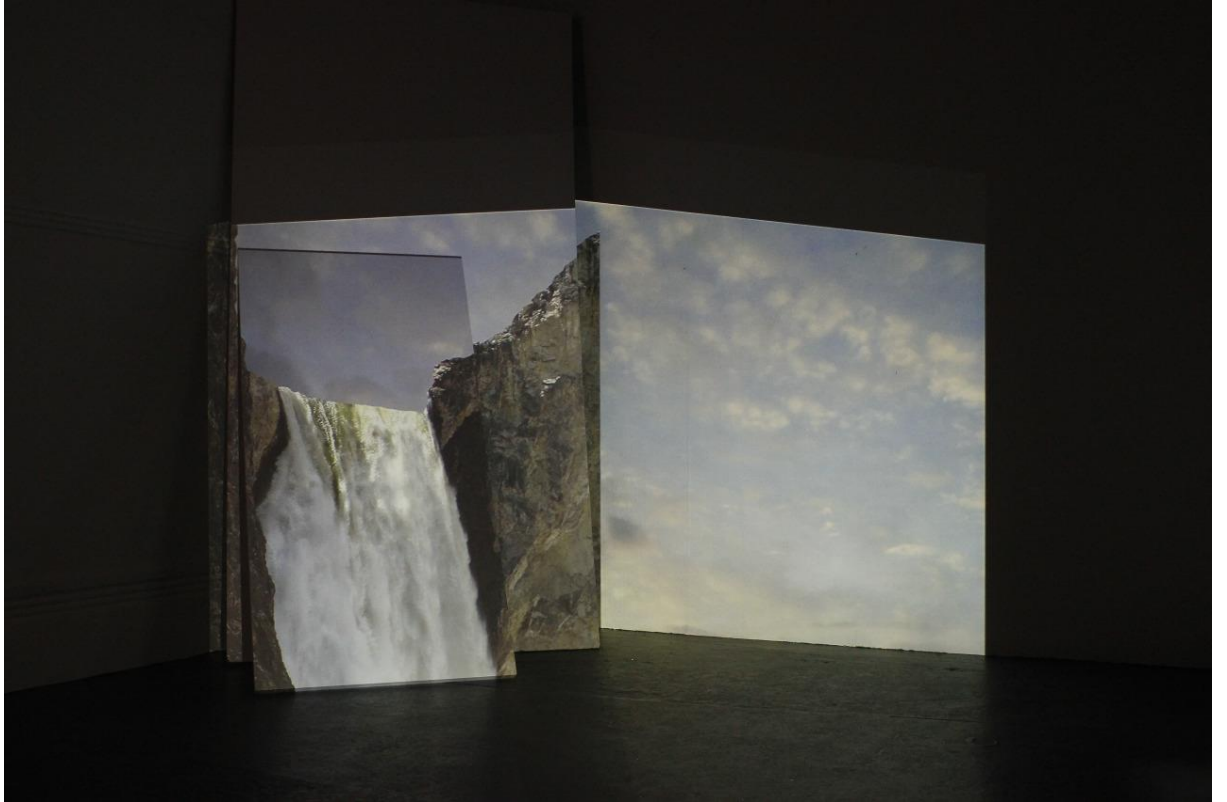


Fig. 6: James Quinn, 'sky waterfall' (2014), video installation

To this end, the work operates along similar lines to Tim O'Brien's 'Realism' (1996) (Fig. 7). Edward Casey's appraisal of O'Brien's painting ascertains that the represented content within the painting "is imbued with the force to destroy the actual physical frame that is designed to contain it. Representation itself overcomes conventional framing, normally a major ally of representation itself" (Casey, 2017: 101).

Though this notion was crucial during the work's inception, 'sky waterfall' does not share the precise characteristics and subsequent conceptual efficacy of O'Brien's works. This is due to the fact that although the work does attempt to offer a representation of content in order to overcome its framing, the image still remains mapped upon the panels it is projected onto. Only the reflected light at the bottom of the work exists outside of the projection surface.

What the work does successfully represent, however, is the precursory steps into experimenting with promoting a reading of the viewing screen's objecthood that directly addresses concepts of the interior and exterior of an artwork. In the case of 'sky waterfall' a conceptual balance is found between the function of the form and the image located within the installation. Through the extension of the *matière* of the screen from a thin, two-dimensional space into a series of sculptural objects that encroach across the gallery floor, there is a conscious attempt to extend and emphasise the objecthood of the work for the viewer.



Fig. 7: Tim O'Brien, 'Realism' (1996), oil on panel, collection of the Museum of American Illustration of Society of Illustrators, New York

Finding such a balance between the frame and the framed, or in the case of this research, the screen and the screened, becomes a key theoretical framework for this practice to explore and promote viewer engagement with the objecthood of the viewing screen. Such an approach aligns with Jacques Derrida's concept of the parergon as outlined in his text *The Truth in Painting* (1987) wherein the frame acts as neither essential nor accessory to the work in question. It is through Derrida's parergonial lens, then, that these works act as resistant to, or at least counterpoint to the hegemonic nature of the frame and its supposed division between interior and exterior. In this way Derrida's parergon offers room for the objecthood of the viewing screen to be promoted to the viewer as an intrinsic aspect of an artwork, marking a departure from its purely structural, vessel-like function for displaying the image.

It is the reiteration of the crucial function of the painting frame-as-parergon that features in Casey's closing appraisal that lays the groundwork for its use in my practice:

No wonder frames need to be *right next to* paintings, for it is from there, at the very edges of the work, that they can work their parergonal magic, an ornamental magic that is complementary to, and supportive of, the major magic of the work itself in its primary presented image. In their play, frames help the work to work; in their work, they help it to play. Frames work and play at the edge – *as* the edge and *from* the edge (Casey 2017: 105).

Exploring this notion of the screen as parergon within practical research outcomes allows the screen viewer to identify the intrinsic role that the screen itself (just as the painting frame) has in relation to the displayed image, and ultimately, to promote a criticality in

the viewer towards the screen's typical position as an invisible vessel for content, towards an appraisal of the screen's essential objecthood.

Screen as frame, parergon

Discussing the exact remit of Derridas' parergon is useful in quantifying the practical outcomes of my research that explore this concept. The concept involves the deconstruction of the Kantian philosophy of the interior and exterior of an artwork in order to provide a lens for examining contemporary visual works, from painting and sculptural practices, to indeed, the field of video and installation.

Kant's *Critique of Judgement* makes clear distinctions between ergon and parerga: the ergon is the element within the work, and endows it with a sense of absolute validity, beauty, or sublimity. The parerga, in marked contrast, represents an aspect fundamentally outside of the work, though often located in close proximity to the ergon. Kant's division between the two terms attempts in some way to limit the manner in which supposed exterior elements of the work would affect the aspect of interior beauty in visual arts. This notion is made clear in Kant's statement that if the frame "does not itself enter into the composition of the beautiful form—if it is introduced like a gold frame merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm—it is then called finery and takes away from the genuine beauty" (Kant, 1952: 57).

Derrida outlines his issue with the imposition of such a dichotomy with regards to the interior and exterior of visual arts. Derrida locates his parergon as "neither work (ergon) nor outside the work ... neither inside nor outside, neither above nor below, it disconcerts

any opposition but does not remain indeterminate and it gives rise to the work” (Derrida, 1987: 9).

The difference that Derrida proposes with the notion of the parergon is clear: far from Kant’s imposed sense of separation between that which is shown (interior/erga) and that which frames it (exterior/parerga) Derrida’s parergon collides the two together, arguing instead for a model that forms a reflexive relationship between that which is depicted within an artwork, and that which might be traditionally considered ancillary, making the statement that the frame “does not stop disturbing the internal order of discourse on painting, its works, its commerce, its evaluations, its surplus-values, its speculation, its law, and its hierarchies” (Ibid.).

As a side note, despite his critique of Kant’s proposed dichotomy between ergon and parerga, Derrida includes the fact that Kant himself gestured towards a reciprocity between these two concepts in his work *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, in that Kant’s general remarks located in conjunction to the text may not be considered as integral to the main text but instead, “verge on it. They touch it, push it, press it, press against it, seek contact, exert a pressure at the frontier” (Kant in Derrida, 1987: 55). The concept of the parergon is a frequently cited concept in fine art practices. One such example might be that the simple pragmatic decision to hide or conceal a work’s fixings might allude to their presence and fortitude as parergon, and in doing so artists may appropriate the concept of the parergon to inhabit and charge their own conceptual agenda. Babak Golka’s series of sculptural works execute the latter clearly, helpfully entitled ‘Parergon’ (2012) (Fig. 8). These works make their aim to problematise the idea of the frame, interrogating the term both linguistically and literally.

Erdem Taşdelen ruminates on this aim and execution of Golka's sculptures, first noting their representational features: "The series is comprised of objects that resemble interrupted/deformed frames. Since these frames are not closed, the viewer is able to view their cross sections and explore the forms" (Taşdelen, 2011).

The works incorporate aspects of "extrusions of architectural silhouettes of some well-known buildings, such as the Hagia Sophia and the Dome of the Rock" (Ibid.) and therefore present a religious subtext attached to such depictions of these Eastern architectural structures. Taşdelen indicates that it may be easy to attribute a "binary opposition between the West and East as a priori" as central to Golka's works in the sense that the "picture frame itself is accepted as an essentially Western device" (Ibid.).

Taşdelen instead promotes a secular, and more importantly, formal reading of Golka's *Parergon*, by emphasising the refusal of the typical closed loop of a framing device. As a result of this opening, this missing link in the frame object, the works "draw attention to the act of framing itself, rather than what is being framed" (Ibid.).

Golka's 'Parergon' and Taşdelen's associated appraisal offers a simple, effective tool to employ in order to emphasise the objecthood of the screen in this research project. By presenting these incomplete frames, the work unequivocally presents the essence of the frame itself, and its associated readings and implications, rather than concerning itself with coercing a viewer into a relationship with what is being displayed or framed.

Extrapolating this concept of a subversion of the typical roles of frame and image could very well draw the viewer towards a critical engagement with the viewing screen's objecthood when employed as part of my practice.

One example of a work that attempts to promote the act of framing itself, and thereby establish the screen as a paregonial device is 'Nimbus I-III' (2018) (Figs. 9-11). This work featured three identical screens installed in different orientations. Each installed screen is encased in a wooden enclosure of sorts, a technical inclusion allowing for an ease of installation and re-orientation of the artwork. Feedback regarding the materiality of these frames was raised during an internal critique, to the effect that the workmanship, crude in places, heightened an association of objecthood in relation to the screen. Replacing the sleek, contemporaneous façade of the tablet screen with a crude enclosure allowed viewers to attribute a sense of rudimentary materiality to the screen in an unforeseen manner. In this sense these elements of the work function as parergon, drawing attention to the framing and objecthood of the screen in the work, as well as functioning in an interstitial space as neither inside nor outside the work.



Fig. 8: Babak Golka, 'Untitled' (2011), acrylic sheets, wood, lacquer, 72" x 60" x 4.5"



Fig. 9: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2018), video installation detail 1



Fig. 10: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2018), video installation detail 2

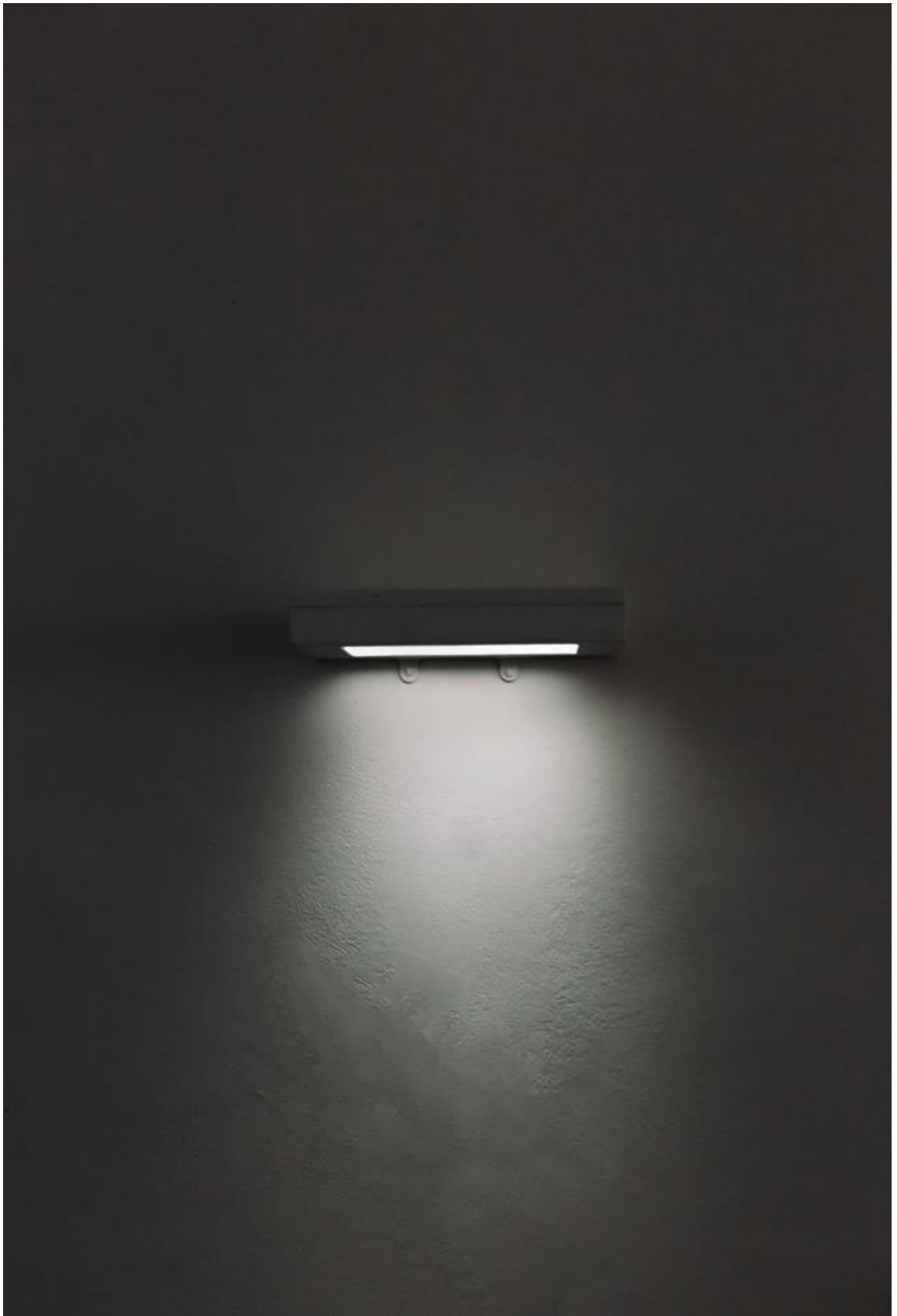


Fig. 11: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2018), video installation detail 3

Pure screen parergon

All of these examples of practical outcomes regarding the exploration and critical alignment of the viewer with the objecthood of the screen culminate into a single practical experiment, as part of 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018) conducted in February 2018 on the first and second floors of the St Georges Project Spaces at Norwich University of the Arts (Fig. 12).

In this practical experiment, each video work installed on the first floor features a strictly formal counterpart on the second floor above it, providing a skeleton of sorts, mimicking the scale and orientation of the work located in the space below (Figs. 13 and 14).

Feedback with regards to this particular work noted that the *mise-en-scène* of the works established on the first floor allowed for a sense of cognitive appraisal to occur. Providing the viewer with a series of electronically or technically saturated works on the floor below emphasises their subsequent removal or absence upstairs. The crucial work occurring here is therefore the action of searching for a pattern, similarity, and absence between the upstairs and downstairs.

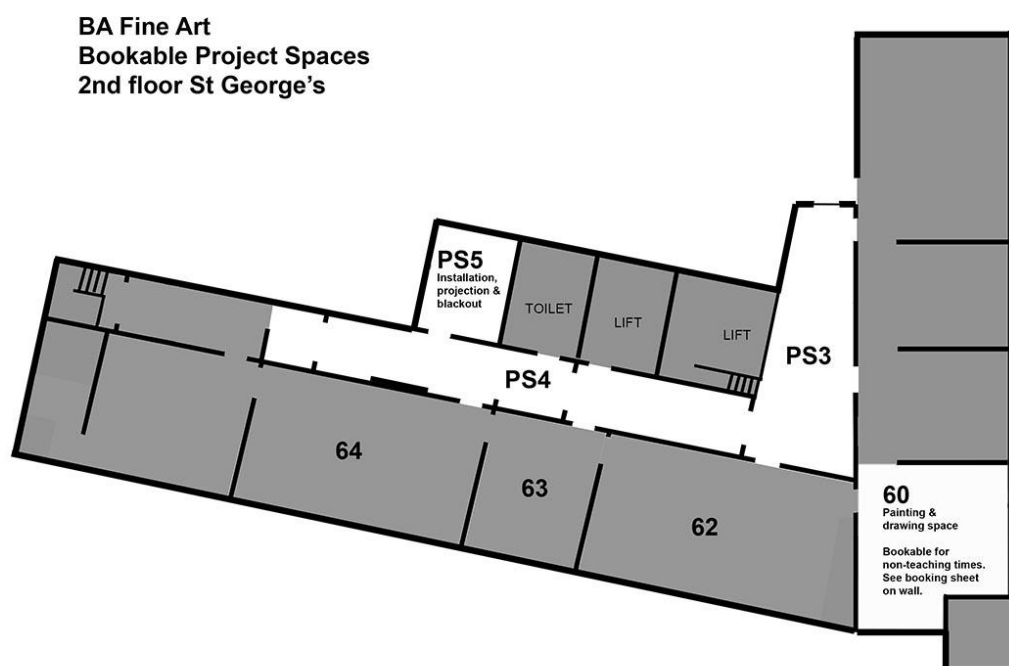
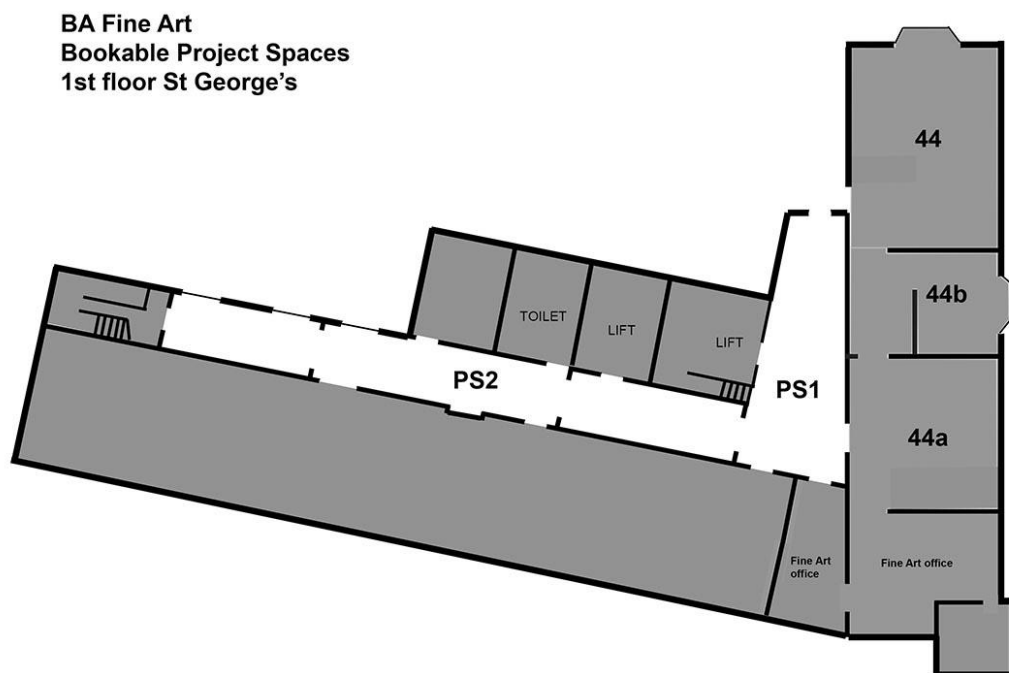


Fig. 12: Norwich University of the Arts, St Georges Building Project Spaces, floors 1 and 2

The vacant frames on the second floor provoked viewers to engage with the objecthood of the screens they had previously viewed on the first floor. These works were therefore to some degree, isolated pure screen parergon – their associated counterparts already established, their representational content removed, only the framing device, the neither here nor there remained. It must be noted that this confrontation with the screens' objecthood is but one of the provocations present in 'Untitled Research Exhibition'. The other aspects present in the work, such as the mobility between the two exhibition floors, and the images presented within the works require appraisal, and as such, this exhibition will be referenced in the other research themes presented throughout this thesis.

Summary

As this thesis makes the transition from this overarching theme in the research of screen objecthood, a short clarification as to the discoveries made in this section should be outlined.

The everyday is mediated and arbitrated by a system of viewership married to the ubiquity of the formal presence of the viewing screen. The result of this ubiquitous 'electronic presence' (Sobchack) is a systematic desensitisation to the objecthood of the screen; instead a predominately image-centred screen encounter substantiates the everyday.

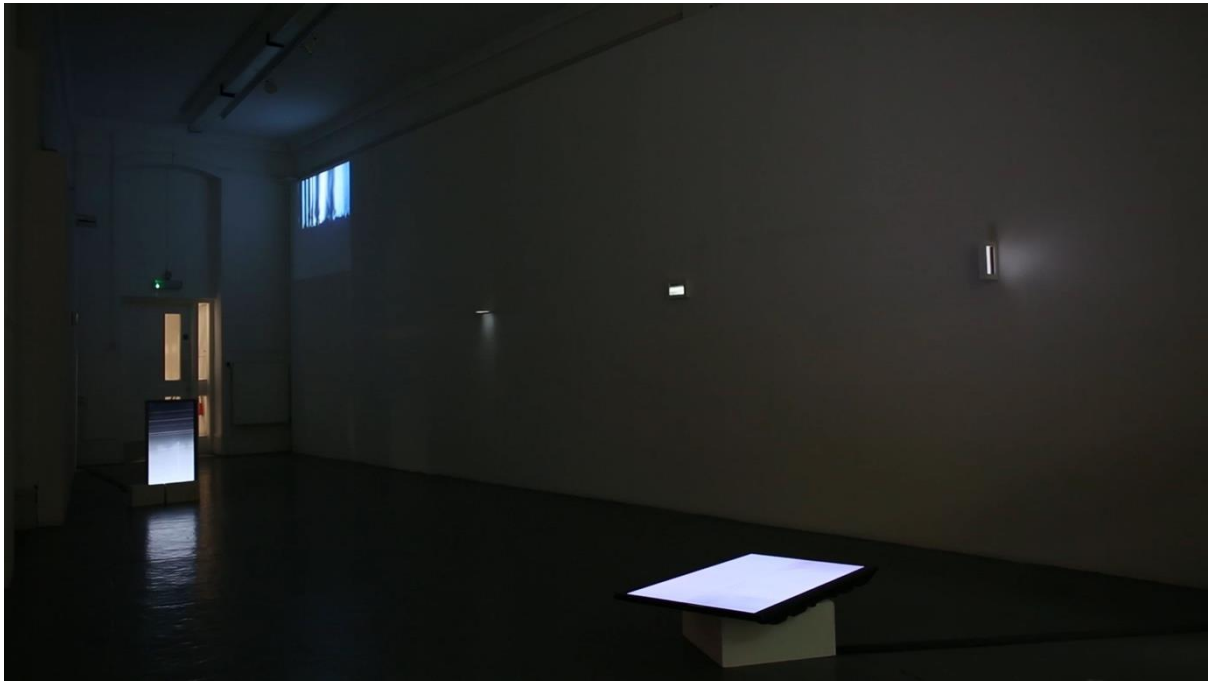


Fig. 13: James Quinn, 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018), exhibition view



Fig. 14: James Quinn, 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018), exhibition view 2

The definition and function of the screen is outlined as highly ambiguous, operating as a paradoxical object that at once mediates, contains, restricts and displays, amongst other functions. The ubiquity of screening technology provokes a critical response, both literary and in the visual arts fields (Mondloch). The multitude of these visual responses cover a broad range of contemporary artists' practices, each with their own rationale for examining viewer subjectivity in relation to the screen. This initial chapter has focused on identifying critical works that examine the objecthood of the viewing screen, tracing the screen's close association with the development of screening technology in the 20th century and its respective relationship with its viewer (Friedberg). Here, identifying common ground with other visual practices, particularly the frame-resistant works of 20th century abstract painters, is key, as it pertains to theoretical rhetoric that supports this research's own attempt to portrayals of the screen, namely its kinship with concepts of the parergon (Derrida).

Outlining these key theoretical and historical references generates the site within which this research's practical outcomes seek to critically realign the viewer with the objecthood of the viewing screen, subverting typical encounters that employ a rhetoric of screen image first, screen structure second (if at all).

Chapter 3: Screen and Mobility

With the various contextual resources and practical outcomes that detail the dimension the viewing screen objecthood qualified and explored in the previous chapter, the focus of this thesis must now shift to another of the parameters present in this research: mobility. This term mobility takes on a series of shapes in supporting contextual discourse, as well as in the practical outcomes regarding the subject. This research's exploration of mobility therefore includes its framing as a problematic dimension within a habitual screen encounter, a multitude of manifestations and critical explorations within other practitioners' screen-based artworks, and as a key relational, and perhaps emancipatory, quality within my own practice.

The key encounter within the work noted at the end of the previous chapter, 'Untitled Research Exhibition' relied on the subtraction of screen content to present a series of strictly structural counter pieces. And yet, reaching this engagement with the concept of screen objecthood is permitted by viewer mobility: the act of moving through the lower floor of the exhibition to the second floor of the exhibition.

A critical re-alignment and re-appraisal of the viewing screen has some relationship with the phenomenon of mobility, not only in this particular outcome, but as a component in viewing research outcomes in earnest. What will become clear throughout this chapter is the range of mobility employed throughout this research project's practical outcomes, its intended effect, its successes, and its failures when weighed up against this research project's aims and theoretical framework.

The chapter will detail the various iterations of mobility occurring within its practical outcomes, from more conventional modes of engagement such as a self-led viewer mobility in relation to works, the act of circumnavigation around works, a choreographed or staged viewer mobility, the purported optimal position to attain a sense of coherency between disparate screened images, or even experiments with the screen's material structure itself gaining a perpetual motion. It is through examining these various iterations of viewer mobility that a critical appraisal of the viewing screen may occur.

Range

Locating the range of this critical engagement with mobility is key. This chapter operates largely around destabilising the notion of a typical, habitual viewing screen encounter through a series of experimental practical outcomes focused on mobility in a variety of forms. These share one thing in common. however: seeking to provide a critical realignment and reappraisal of the viewing screen.

The typical encounter described above is that of the user, often solitary, viewing the screen face-on from a static, prescribed, frontal viewpoint. This scenario equally describes the office monitor user, the home television user, and the cinema goer. What is of equal importance is how this concept of mobility attempts to challenge this typical encounter, what access or obliquity it provides the screen viewer, and how this research's practical outcomes incorporate aspects to promote a wakeful reading of the viewing screen.

To reach this point however, and to substantiate the validity of these visual outcomes, it is important to first engage with concurrent debates aligning with these concepts. As with the previous chapter, establishing the series of key theoretical texts that have guided the development and experimentation with mobility in this body of work is crucial.

Typical viewing encounter

Establishing the root of this typical screen encounter provides a key first step. Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media* perhaps provides the groundwork for this notion by categorising disparate viewer encounters with the screen, introducing the terms 'classical' and 'dynamic' screen. 'Classical screen' denotes "another three-dimensional world enclosed by a frame and situated inside our normal space. The frame separates two absolutely different spaces that somehow exist" (Manovich, 2001: 95). Traits of the classical screen include a "flat, rectangular surface. It is intended for frontal viewing... It exists in our normal space, the space of our body, and acts as a window into another space... Defined in this way, a screen describes equally well a renaissance painting and a modern computer display" (ibid.).

The 'dynamic screen' however represents a shift from the singular image, statically portrayed on the classical screen, to "an image changing over time. This is the screen of cinema, television, video" (Manovich, 2001: 96). Such a shift in screen-based imagery results in the development of a "viewing regime" (ibid.), or the viewing behaviours associated with the screen that this aspect of the research targets. Essentially, as Manovich states, "Although the screen in reality is only a window of limited dimensions positioned inside the physical space of the viewer, the viewer is excited to concentrate

completely on what she sees in this window, focusing her attention on the representation and disregarding the physical space outside” (ibid.).

This dynamic screen and its associated viewing regime as posited by Manovich therefore neatly align themselves alongside the previously established concept of a typical or habitual viewing screen encounter: a front-facing, representation-centric spatially static viewing encounter with the screen.

Authoritative screen

Such a viewership regime ties closely to works and texts that concern themselves with the authoritative nature of the screen, and its subsequent effect on any given viewer. Roland Barthes introduces the screen in *Image/Music/Text* as an authoritative mode of representation, across both visual and non-visual (literary) works:

The ‘Organon of Representation’... will have as its dual foundation the sovereignty of the act of cutting out ... and the unity of the subject in action ... The scene, the picture, the shot, the cut-out rectangle, here we have the very *condition* that allows us to conceive theatre, painting, cinema, literature, all those arts, that is, other than music and which could be *dioptric arts* (Barthes, 1977: 69-70).

Barthes leaves little uncertainty as to the all-compassing, multi-format ubiquity of the viewing screen, and the authoritative dimension it carries. Indeed, continuing, Barthes claims the screen is “a pure cut-out segment with clearly defined edges, irreversible and incorruptible; everything that surrounds it is banished into nothingness, remains

unnamed, while everything that it admits within its field is promoted into essence, into light, into view” (Ibid.). Barthes’ rationale is clear here: in the hegemony of screen-reliant viewership, that which appears within the screen format is of higher fidelity than that located on the exterior. Certainly, this aspect has been explored with regards to the objecthood of the screen in the previous chapter, via an application of Derrida’s concept of the parergon. However, with Barthes establishing this sense of hierarchy between the internal and external of screen viewership, the opportunity now is to examine this notion alongside the aspect of viewer mobility in the viewing screen encounter.

Barthes’ proposition of the authoritative screen has ramifications with regards to the viewer’s mobility. This is best demonstrated by referring back to Manovich’s writings, and the ramifications of such internal priority as explored in *The Language of New Media*, as he references the film *The Draughtman’s Contract* (1982) by Peter Greenway (Fig. 15). Herein lies the portrayal of the film’s eponymous character framed by the representational apparatus he employs to document the world around him. For Manovich, such framing serves as an imprisonment of the character, but also as a metaphor for a wider concern: the fixing of the viewer’s body in one specific space in relation to the screen. Manovich notes that this “imprisonment of the body” (Manovich, 2001: 105) occurs with the screen in all its historic permeations, citing Norman Bryson’s analysis of the painterly gaze as a starting point: “The gaze of the painter arrests the flux of phenomena, contemplates the visual field from a vantage point outside the mobility of duration, in an eternal moment of disclosed presence” (Bryson, 1983: 94).



Fig. 15: Film still from *The Draughtman's Contract*, (1982) directed by Peter Greenaway,
British Film Institute Channel 4, by United Artists Classics (USA)

This sense of imprisonment equally applies to the contemporary understanding of the screen and its viewer. Manovich notes that the initial discourse regarding moving image on the viewing screen made claim to the viewer's emancipation from any sense of petrification. For instance, Walter Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' stated that "Our taverns ... metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly ... When came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now ... we calmly and adventurously go traveling" (Benjamin, 1973: 238).

This emancipatory notion is countered as Manovich clearly establishes this sense of imprisonment across different historical iterations of viewing screens: "Alberti's window, Dürer's perspectival machines, the camera obscura, photography, cinema – in all of these screen-based apparatuses, the subject has to remain immobile" (Manovich, 2001: 109). Such immobility leads to "the progressive imprisonment of the viewer" (Ibid.). The dynamic between viewer and viewing screen proposed by Manovich is clear: a relationship centred on an increasingly immobile viewer engaging autonomously with successions of images on viewing screens.

Manovich points out that the current commodification and ubiquity of screening technology leads to further imprisonment on an unprecedented scale: "The cinema screen enabled audiences to take a journey through different spaces without leaving their seats ... However, the cost of this virtual mobility was a new institutionalized immobility of the spectator" (Manovich, 2001: 107).

Regarding virtual reality

For Manovich, even contemporary virtual reality technologies (VR), purporting radical alterations to the viewer screen interface, remain emblematic of user imprisonment. Manovich implements the previously acknowledged screen-less future as presented in Anna Friedberg's *The Virtual Window: From Albert to Microsoft* to illustrate this point.

The result of this screen-less outlook is, for Manovich, two-fold. Certainly, such technology incentivises, or indeed necessitates physical mobility in order to engage with that which is being represented. As such, it presents itself as a break from perceptual and spatial traditions such as the cinematic encounter, where the immobile viewer remains independent from the mobile representation within the screen. However, despite VR presenting these complex new series of hegemony-defying parameters, for Manovich, it still threatens a mode of immobility. By inextricably linking viewer mobility with that which is represented, this mobility therefore operates paradoxically: as Manovich states, "The paradox of VR that requires the viewer to physically move in order to see an image (as opposed to remaining immobile) and at the same time physically ties her/him to a machine" (Manovich, 2001: 110).

Manovich argues that although "The spectator is no longer chained, immobilized, anesthetized by the apparatus which serves him the ready-made images; now s/he has to work, to speak, in order to see" (ibid.). A severe caveat presents itself as a result of this. Such mobility is afforded only by a different system of imprisonment – a complete collapsing of the space between the viewer and the screen. Manovich's simple appraisal is

that the body therefore becomes “reduced to nothing else - and nothing more - than a giant mouse, or more, precisely, a giant joystick”, and as such “VR imprisons the body to an unprecedented extent than ever before” (ibid.) in consequence.

It is at this stage that a quick disclaimer regarding the suitability of VR as a mode of practical engagement with the research’s key aims must be made. Acknowledging the development of virtual reality and screen-less technologies adds necessary context to this project, and whilst Manovich and Friedberg’s appraisal of the synthesis of future virtual reality technologies with their users is certainly relevant, this is not an area that this research intends to examine in any great detail.

The motivation behind this decision takes several shapes. Firstly, these are nascent, specialist technologies, in the sense that they do not perpetuate to the same extent that other modalities of screens in the public domain. Although the reach of VR technologies in contemporary society has seen ample growth since Manovich’s text’s publication, as well as a wider presence in the field of visual arts, as Manovich states, the large proportion of everyday habitual screen interaction still defaults to the typical rectangular viewing space, separate from its viewer, offering itself as an opening into another space. This encounter is the primary site for this project’s investigation, and although VR presents a unique set of new problematic parameters adjacent to this research’s own, they remain disparate enough to justify exclusion. Perhaps Manovich best demonstrates this simply with the statement “Rather than disappearing, the screen threatens to take over our offices, cities and homes” (Manovich, 2001: 114).

Additionally, Manovich’s conjecture is contingent upon technological developments and

the willingness of viewers to integrate themselves with such technologies: “we will carry our prisons with us ... the retina and the screen will merge” (Manovich, 2001: 113). As such, this future vision remains hypothetical: up to now VR technologies remain specialist, bespoke models for engagement with the digital image, a far cry from the ubiquitous presence of the viewing screen in other formats. Manovich instead offers “For now, we clearly live in the society of the screen ... Dynamic, real-time, and interactive, a screen is still a screen ... We are still looking at a flat, rectangular surface, existing in the space of our body and acting as a window into another space. We still have not left the era of the screen” (Manovich, 2001: 114).

Whilst I concede that the mobile dimensions of VR offer a counterpoint to traditional systems of frontal screen viewership, or as Manovich claims, a new ‘condition’ of viewership, they do not present an opportunity to critically reappraise the viewing screen in perceptual and spatial parameters. Instead, VR proposes a complete synthesis with the screen, which certainly partially addresses some of this research project’s aims but is simultaneously symptomatic of the conditions that facilitate screen dependency. VR advocates a complete synthesis between viewer and screen, and as such no advantage or critical appraisal over habitual systems of screen viewership are offered with this technology – it simply crushes the distance between the screen and viewer and implicates the body deep within representation. This notion of VR embedding the viewer within the representation demonstrates how such technologies cannot provoke the critical relationship with the viewing screen that this research covets, particularly with regards to the concept of viewer mobility.

To reiterate: the notion that the viewing screen somehow facilitates an immobile

imprisonment of the screen viewer is therefore the key problematic dimension that this chapter seeks to interrogate. The remit for this chapter therefore is to challenge this sense of immobility or authority and its entrenchment as the de-facto relationship the viewer might have with the viewing screen; instead, engendering a viewing mobility provokes a critical relationship with the viewing screen. The practical outcomes in this chapter seek therefore to afford the viewer some sense of alternative positioning about the screen via mobility, as a remedy to this growing sense of habitual immobility. Developing a theoretical framework based on topics such as spectatorship, the everyday, and viewer emancipation for this project's practice-led research to operate in and around is the site within which this critical mobility can emerge.

Anaesthesia

This sentiment of the everyday, the desensitisation that occurs through habitual encounters, the digestion of this notion, and subsequent ambitions to offer an alternative, is a topic discussed in various examples of French philosophical literature. A number of these texts feature ruminations as to the nature of spatial and perceptual encounters with everyday surroundings. These discussions extend into thoughts surrounding desensitisation toward the habitual, unpacking and critiquing notions of the everyday, in terms of immersion, desensitisation, and emancipation from the structures or routines that are frequently engaged with or encountered. Through such texts, the critical tools for exploring countermeasures to habitual viewing screen immobility begin to present themselves. Georges Perec talks of a form of desensitisation through habitual ritual: "This is no longer even conditioning, it's anaesthesia. We sleep through our lives in a dreamless sleep. But where is our life? Where is our body? Where is our space?" (Perec, 1997: 205-

7). For Perec, this was an assessment of the public's interaction with urban landscape and architectural space. And yet, both the habitual usage of the screen and its associated viewing behaviours and conditions seem to align themselves with this statement.

Dramatic as it may appear, according to the precedent set by Manovich, ubiquitous screen presence and its associated viewing behaviours imprison the viewer in an immobile spatial encounter. Perec's concept of habitual anaesthesia, with its closely associated loss of perceptual and spatial criticality, runs parallel with the symptoms of viewing screens and their immobility. Provoking similar critical reflection within the habitual regime of screen viewership is therefore crucial – somehow destabilising this encounter or providing the screen viewer with tools to do so him or herself is paramount to this chapter's aims.

Obliquity

Provoking a viewing screen encounter that is a critical alternative to this notion of the habitual frontal engagement, with its associated connotations of imprisonment and anaesthesia becomes the next key distinction in this practice-led research. Francois Jullien's text, *The Philosophy of Living*, provides a series of discussions regarding the problematic scenario of extracting oneself from conscious or subconscious actions that constitute the everyday. For instance, Jullien writes "How to *gain access* to what or in what we find ourselves already still committed – from which all springing up and plenitude originates but which is precisely what we lose hold of because we are immersed in it?" (Jullien, 2016: 220). What one must also acknowledge is Jullien's attempt to propose a series of solutions to this conundrum. For instance, the statement "What obliqueness, ruse or detour could be introduced to enable us to lift ourselves to the point

of facing that from which we remain ineluctably without a distance which allows us to conquer it?" (Jullien, 2016: 220). Here Jullien offers a point parallel to this research investigation's aim. Can there be a systemic obliquity that one might consciously or subconsciously exhibit or perform, that might seek to emancipate users from habit or convention? Admittedly I am applying Jullien's theory of obliqueness to a context that it was not originally intended to operate within. Obliqueness in the context of this research is therefore not a figurative concept as per Jullien's literature, but instead a literal product of viewer mobility, seeking to destabilise the typical viewing screen encounter.

'Obliqueness' or 'obliquity' is a key term that will feature throughout the remainder of this chapter. It represents provoking a rationale for criticality or wakefulness in relation to embedded habitual behaviours. It is the site of reflection, the point of access that emphasises clarity and quantification of any given behavioural move set. Obliquity in relation to this practice-led research and its practical outcomes therefore involves a mobile encounter that resists traditional frontal viewing conditions, presenting an oblique position in relation to the viewing screen, thereby providing the viewer with the tools to critically reappraise it. Sitting chronologically as the first example of work that sought to probe into providing the viewer with an obliqueness with regards to the screen was the work 'Staggered Horizon' (2015) (Fig.16). As this work served as preface to the large bulk of the practice-led research on the research degree, it attempted to achieve this sense of obliquity in very different capacities than works that will appear throughout the rest of the chapter. Given the fact that this work sat at the front of what would soon become my research degree study, it marks a key stage in this developing sense of an obliqueness with respect to habitual modes of screen viewership.

‘Staggered Horizon’ is a work that incorporates concepts of composition and landscape into its makeup. I have until this point attempted to postpone discussion of the role of the imagery of my video works in this thesis, as this aspect of the research has presented its problematic aspects that warrant an in-depth analysis. For the sake of clarity in this instance, however, it is useful to outline the role that supplementary theoretical research had within the work in sculpting the mobility provoked within the installation, particularly regarding the subject matter portrayed.

The work was the culmination of a series of experiments into themes of distance, composition and the horizon line. Hito Steyerl’s *Wretched of the Screen* contributed further to dialogue by presenting the horizon line as a key foundational component in “defining limits of communication and understanding. Beyond the horizon, there was only muteness and silence. Within it, things could be made visible. But it could also be used for determining one’s own location and relation to one’s surroundings, destinations, or ambitions” (Steyerl, 2012: 15). It is here that Steyerl dissolves these universal truth claims as to the horizon’s nature: “Its scientific allure and objectivist attitude established a universal claim for representation, a link to veracity that undermined particularistic worldviews” (Steyerl, 2012: 20). ‘Staggered Horizon’ engages with this sentiment on certain levels, aiming to further interrogate the purported universal tenets of landscape composition by provoking an oblique movement in relation to the works installed screened images.



Fig. 16: James Quinn, 'Staggered Horizon' (2015), video installation

The work presents a familiar horizon composition segmented across the exhibition floor – three separate screens of varying technical makeup (two 42-inch television monitors and one 60-inch projector screen) are separately presented within the exhibition space, though there is a strong suggestion of continuity between these images' subject matter. This notion of coherency between images became a tool that I could employ to guide and direct viewers around the installed viewing screens. In addition to this, the spaces between the screened images invite the viewer to walk behind and beyond the installed screens, leaving them implicit in the composition of the depicted landscape, as close to the horizon line as possible. This notion of movement presenting a reversal of screen surface, or a transgressive movement is something explored at a later stage of this chapter.

Following 'Staggered Horizon', further practical experiments were conducted with an aim to generate an oblique position for the viewer to engage with screen-based artworks. The result was a series of iterative outcomes including 'Horizon slip 1' and 'Horizon slip 2' (2016) (Figs. 17 – 20). These works were generated with a similar concept as the 'Staggered Horizon' installation – exploring the notion of articulating an oblique point for the viewer to view the work, afforded after re-assessing his or her spatial conditions in relation to the work. An adjustment takes place in the viewer's movement here, with the typical frontal screen-viewing position exchanged in favour of an acute or obtuse angle with which to achieve coherency between the screened images.

'Horizon slip 1' specifically was generated precisely to follow up, or even streamline, the concepts outlined in 'Staggered Horizon'. The projection was removed from these works, instead opting for a pair of screened digital images, each fixed to a stand of its own. In

removing the central projected image, as well as preventing any access to the exterior of the works as presented, 'Horizon slip 1' attempted to further experiment with the notion of providing a viewer with an optimal oblique viewing point of the viewing screen via viewers' mobile re-assessment. 'Horizon slip 2' (2016) presents the exact opposite of the mobility engendered in the previous iteration. Here, the frontal view of the screens is the purported optimal view, and by standing directly in front of the two screens the sense of coherency between the two separate screen instances is formed. The provocation here, however, is that by presenting the optimal view within the initial frontal viewing of the work, any viewer movement occurring thereafter dislocates this viewpoint. The sense of initial coherency in the frontal screen encounter is underpinned by the threat of a destabilising obliqueness incurred by viewer mobility.



Fig. 17: James Quinn, 'Horizon slip 1' (2016), video installation



Fig. 18: James Quinn, 'Horizon slip 1' (2016), video installation, view 2

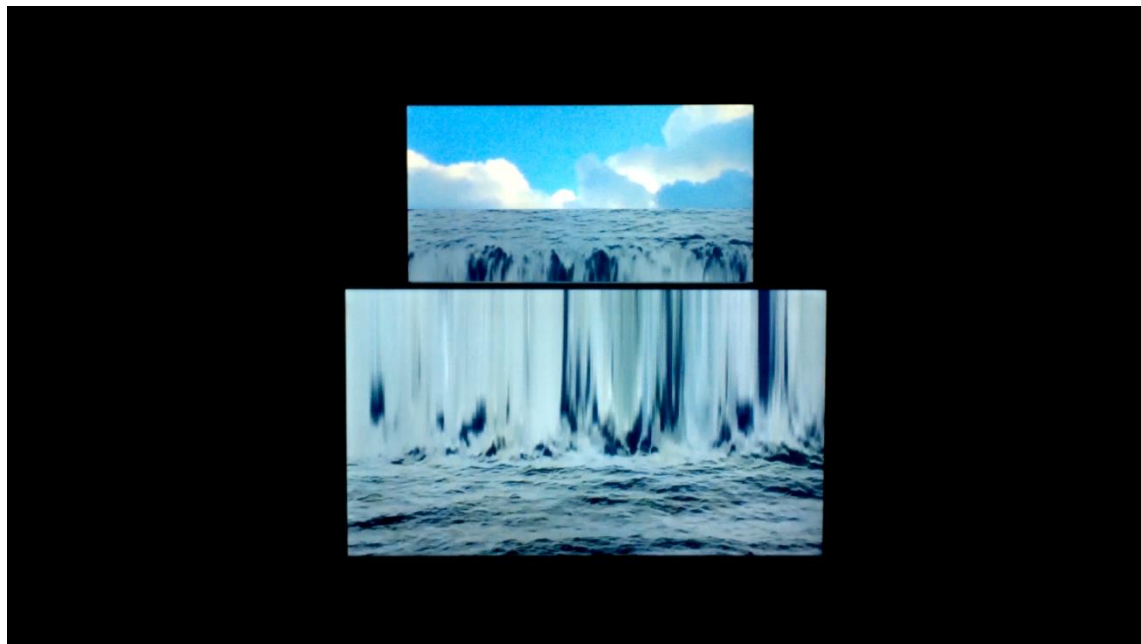


Fig. 19: James Quinn, 'Horizon slip 2' (2016), video installation



Fig. 20: James Quinn, 'Horizon slip 2' (2016), video installation, view 2

These works are therefore not dissimilar from Marcel Duchamp's authored perspective offered in his work '*Étant Donnés*' (1964-1966) (Fig. 21). Duchamp's work provides its viewer with a small pinhole on the surface of a door through which to view the art installation. The resulting effect is a perspectival flattening of the three-dimensional aspects of the work, each arranged separately from one another behind the viewing door across the length of several metres. This assemblage therefore appears to the viewer as a complete two-dimensional image through the viewing point. Another aspect of the work involves the cultivation of a desirous gaze provoked by the work, insofar as the fact that the pinhole does not provide the viewer with the entirety of the vista presented in the three-dimensional aspect of the work. It is this permeating sense of the artist directly prescribing a specific point of view and the resulting effects of such prescription that aligns '*Staggered Horizon*' and the '*Horizon Slip*' series.

As far as continuing this notion of a specific oblique position with which to challenge typical frontal screen viewership, certain outcomes of my practice felt as though they were not providing any meaningful contribution or development to the research. One such work, '*Cloud Line*' (2016) (Fig. 22), sought to continually segment installed screen instances, resulting in a fractured image of separate parts spread across an exhibition space, forming a whole. This work seemed to offer nothing other than to demonstrate the same concepts and themes handled in previous works, and therefore did not proceed past preliminary design stages.



Fig. 21: Marcel Duchamp, 'Étant Donnés' (1964-1966), installation

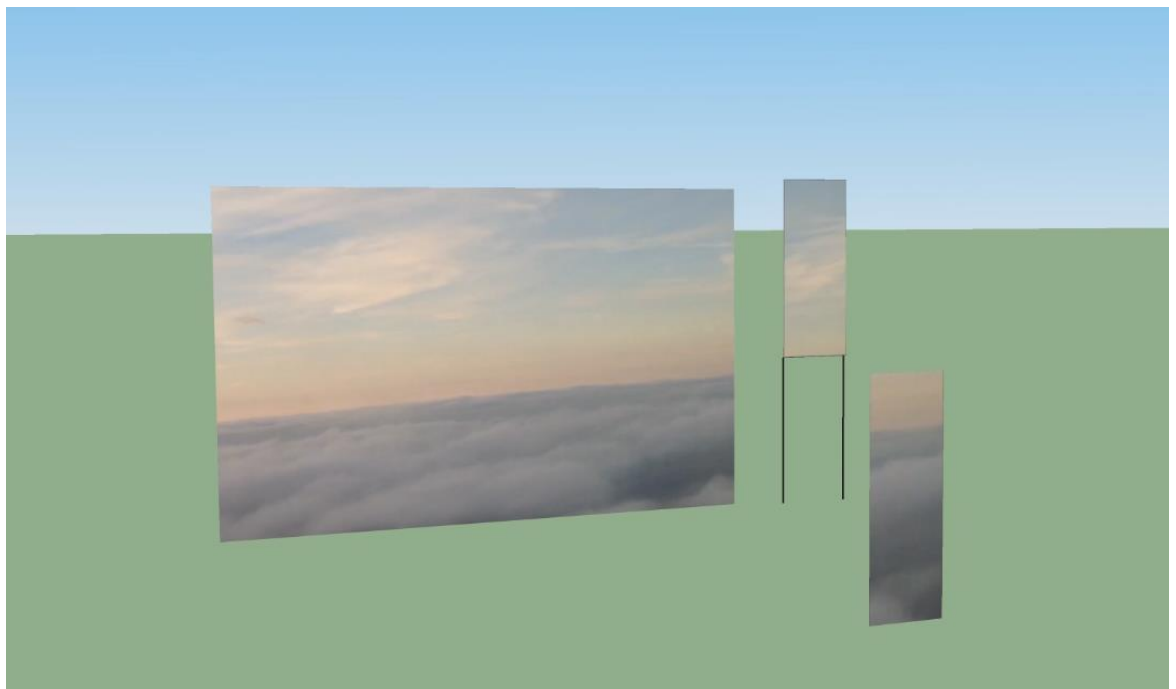


Fig. 22: James Quinn, 'Cloud Line' (2016), installation concept

What this research would soon encounter after adopting Jullien's concept of obliqueness is that providing an oblique encounter with a screen-centred artwork does not necessarily emancipate the viewer from embedded habitual viewing regimes. Signposting this desire for obliquity in the research provides the connective tissue with other concurrent debates on the matter, specifically regarding the concepts of passivity or activity within arts audiences.

Emancipation

This discourse is particularly pointed at the concepts of passive viewership and active viewership, each providing their own problematic theoretical dimensions, primarily the fact that the concept of obliqueness carries with it its own breadth of theoretical discourse, or perhaps even a set of rules to carefully consider. If this research wishes to assert that viewer obliquity in relation to the screen provides a critical toolset that transforms the passive screen viewer-as-receptacle into an active critical engager, further discourse on this concept of an emancipation from passivity must be considered.

Jullien's concept of obliqueness therefore steered the research toward concepts of the active and passive viewer. Achieving an emancipation from passivity is frequently cited in literature that problematises representation, often appropriated to emphasise political agendas. Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* explores the concept of passivity to this extent, and although considered a key text for the situationist movement of the mid-20th century, could equally speak to the viewing conditions concurrent with ubiquitous screen usage. Indeed, Debord's concept of the spectacle perhaps predicted the range and outcome of habitual screen use in contemporary society.

This 'spectacle' in question is a branch of capitalism that profoundly alters public experience, from understanding of history or time, to social interactivity and subjectivity, amongst other aspects. The spectacle therefore achieves these alterations by manifesting itself within the collective lived everyday. According to Debord, this permeation of capitalist power from economic production to that of daily events is where the spectacle is located. As such, Debord outlines the spectacle as a form of subterfuge, that by framing events in this way allows power to qualify or, indeed, disguise itself. Debord does note however that this concept of the spectacle does not align with the mass proliferation of media technologies or series of images, but instead with the "social relation between people that is mediated by images" (Debord, 2012: 10).

Perhaps of key note is Debord's engagement with the notion of art as a form of resistance to the spectacle. The now long-embedded concept of *détournement* involves the practice of taking an already existing expression and re-presenting it so as to change its meaning. This technique therefore serves as the situationists' vehicle for this anti-spectacular model. The range of subversive tactics *détournement* employs might include billboard liberation, spoof reproductions, or subvertising, essentially providing a "flexible language of anti-ideology" (Debord, 2012: 76), that forms as resistance to the spectacle.

How might this fit in as far as gainful obliquity is concerned with regards to screen viewers and their mobility? Certainly, appropriating the practice of *détournement* and its attempt to destabilise the ubiquity and homogeneity of the spectacle might at first seem to be a legitimate route to obliquity. However, as one might expect with a text written in the mid-20th century, there have been a series of counterarguments levelled against *Society of the Spectacle*, largely taking aim at this notion of passivity in audience's reciptence of the

titular spectacle.

A growing resistance towards the notion of the audience as a passive receptacle has since developed. These include perspectives such as Ien Ang's proposal that "Media audiences are not 'masses' - anonymous and passive aggregates of people without identity" (Ang, 1995: 219) while the early work of Stuart Hall makes the argument that people are not passive recipients of mediated messages but are active in receiving and 'de-coding' (Hall, 1973). And yet, the passivity of which these writers speak refers to how different social and cultural demographics interpret visual content and operate on the presumption that there are no passive viewers whatsoever in spectatorship.

Jacques Rancière's position in *The Emancipated Spectator* (2008) should be taken into account in relation to each of these concepts. In this text, Rancière takes aim at the concept of the passive audience when responding to or engaging with the arts in the broadest sense of the term, from theatrical performances to fine art works. Here Rancière acknowledges the desire to transfer passivity to activity in audiences, often seeking to embody audiences with criticality or objectivity in relation to that which they spectate: "Even if the playwright or director does not know what she wants the spectator to do, he at least knows one thing: she knows that she must do one thing - overcome the gulf separating activity from passivity" (Rancière 2008: 12).

However, the key principle in *The Emancipated Spectator* emphasises the ineffectual nature of these practices. Rancière states that practitioners who outline their viewer as passive in their reception of their chosen media, and subsequently seek to problematise, interrogate, or destabilise this passivity in favour of an active appraisal with the work, only

reinforce the notion of their audience as passive receptacles, thus preventing the work in question from becoming emancipatory. For Rancière, this is perpetuated across all visual arts forms.

This “paradox of the spectator” (Rancière: 2008: 2) is contingent on the notion that emancipation can only truly occur in a viewer making judgements based on her or his own experience and knowledge. If therefore an artwork is designed to emancipate, by virtue of this prescription, the work fails to become emancipatory.

Rancière denotes political art as emblematic of this: “the aim is to create an awareness of political situations leading to political mobilization” (Rancière, 2008: 74) by means of “producing a sensory form of strangeness, a clash of heterogenous elements provoking a rupture in ways of seeing and, therewith, an examination of the causes of that oddity” (Ibid.). Rancière dismantles the somewhat linear suggestion of this proposition, noting that there is “no straightforward road from the fact of looking at a spectacle to the fact of understanding the state of the world; no direct road from intellectual awareness to political action” (Rancière, 2008: 75).

Rancière instead argues that works that attempt to engender or design emancipation only serve to “shift from a given sensible world to another sensible world that defines different capacities and incapacities, different forms of tolerance and intolerance” (Ibid.). The position outlined here is that designing viewing visual arts as emancipatory articles for their viewer is paradoxical. Seeking a transition from viewers as passive receptacles to active participants, by ways of purporting an activating moment via rupture, breakage, or alternate means is destined to fail, as emancipation cannot be designed or calculated in

absolute measure.

As one might expect, this critique extends to Debord's *détournement*. Rancière points out that "the practice of *détournement* still features on all agendas" (Ibid.) including 'parodies of promotional films; reprocessed disco sounds; advertising icons or media stars modelled in wax... and so on and so forth' (ibid.). Synthesised as part of the concurrent vernacular regarding emancipatory visual arts models, and its core subversive values thereby becoming commonplace, *détournement* represents a failure in emancipation to Rancière. Moreover, he doubts their validity as emancipatory works, or the assumption that they "help us discover the power of the commodity, the reign of the spectacle" (Rancière, 2008: 76) because no viewer of these works is "unaware of these things" (Ibid.) and therefore the work in question ends up "revolving around itself and capitalizing on that undecidability" (Ibid.).

Rancière's proposal here is that if artworks attempt to author viewer emancipation by directly relying upon a specific condition of viewership as in Duchamp's pinhole, or the purported optimal oblique viewing position in this research's outcomes, then this emancipation cannot occur. In light of this notion of a designed emancipation ultimately forming another series of authoritative viewing conditions for the passive viewer, research outcomes previously explored such as 'Staggered Horizon' and 'Horizon Slip 1 and 2', and even the proposed design for 'Cloud Line' series, become problematic. These works certainly engender a spatial re-evaluation of the viewer but do so in outlining a specific position within which viewers can achieve an optimal, oblique view of the work. Following viewers spatial readjustment to an oblique angle, these works simply re-stage the hegemonic nature of the frontal, habitual view of the screen, albeit from an oblique angle.

Even from this initial designed obliqueness engendered by the work, the screen asserts its authority on the viewer after his or her spatial re-adjustment, leading to a subsequent passive engagement with the screen.

Rancière's critique of the active-passive paradox is not without a suggestion for improvement, however. Emancipation can still occur, in any situation, when the viewer in question does not permit a designed *abrutissement* (or stultification of the viewer) but instead consciously engages his or her mind to deconstruct any designed outcome of the situation in question, be it artwork, or anything else. In other words, and to reiterate a point previously made, the works do not design emancipation, but instead facilitate a mode of criticality cultivated through user (or viewer) personal experience.

This is best clarified when Rancière proposes a partially conclusive emancipatory solution in the form of the "pensive image" (Rancière 2008: 107). The pensive image, or pensiveness, is parley to a mode of viewership that sits between the concepts of the passive and the active, developing a mode of viewership Rancière argues as a "zone of indeterminacy" (Ibid.). This concept is explored throughout a series of case studies, though most pragmatically through photographic practice:

It might be characterized as an effect of the circulation between the subject, the photographer and us of the intentional and the unintentional, the known and the unknown, the expressed and unexpressed the present and the past... The pensiveness of photography would then be the tension between several modes of representation (Rancière, 2008: 114-115).

It can therefore be gleaned that this indeterminacy lies in the aspects of viewers' speculation, and subsequent exertion of their own experience, knowledge, or thinking into the visual entity in question. Rancière summarises that "Pensiveness thus refers to a condition that is indeterminately between the active and the passive" (Rancière, 2008: 107).

Emancipatory possibility exists within this pensiveness – "it arrives to suspend narrative logic in favour of an indeterminate expressive logic" (Rancière 2008: 122). Certainly, this shift away from a narrative-centred representational regime towards a deconstructivist phenomenological regime feels as though it is the key motivation within *The Emancipated Spectator*. By demarcating a line between works that might include a prescribed emancipatory agenda, gesture or intention, and those that engender emancipation via critical reflection, Rancière provides the basis for a mode of viewership that might generate new possibilities and connections.

Rancière's distinction regarding designed and self-led viewer emancipation contributes to this research's practical experiments. The key notion is that a designed mobility in practical outcomes - even resulting in an oblique viewing angle for the viewer - serves to reiterate the very same passive viewing conditions that the project seeks to challenge. According to Rancière, emancipation from passivity can only occur if the engagement is akin to that of the pensive image – speculative, unprescribed, and most importantly, located entirely in the experience and motivations of the viewer or user. This research's outcomes therefore aim to generate the site within which a self-led viewer mobility destabilises traditional, authoritative and passive immobile encounters with the viewing screen. This self-led emancipation in relation to the typical screen encounter cultivates a

critical relationship towards the viewing screen.

This research therefore generates a term within which the oblique mobility engendered by artworks remains sensitive to the tenets of emancipation as outlined in Rancière's writing: 'emancipatory obliquity'. This term, 'emancipatory obliquity', denotes a viewing condition that remains sensitive to the fact that directing a supposed optimal mobility within which to view my research outcomes stultifies the viewer – reinforcing his or her role as a passive recipient in viewing screen encounters. Instead, the work incentivises a holistic mobility that allows viewers to reach a critical obliqueness in relation to the viewing screen based on their own personal experience.

Emancipatory obliquity

This notion of generating an emancipatory obliquity in arts practice occurs, to some degree, in Boris Groys' text *Art and Money*. The text explores the concept of the screen user interface nearing its closure. What is key in this short closing segment of the text is the differentiation that Groys establishes between a typical solitary engagement with a screen, and the alternative offered by installation artworks and the spaces within which they are exhibited.

This notion inextricably links itself to Groys' rhetoric regarding the immaterial versus material, and, as the title of the text might indicate, the key difference these two examples might have with regards to value, commodity, consumption, and the global art market. Within this text, an appraisal of the screen-based art installation as a model for disordering conventional screen viewership into a public, social, and material focused

encounter is therefore established.

Art and Money begins with the typical encounter with the viewing screen, or in Groys' words, "someone sitting in an apartment, office, or studio looking at the screen of his or her personal computer" (Groys, 2011). This typical encounter represents, to Groys, a "solitary communication with the medium" wherein "one falls into a state of self-oblivion, an oblivion of one's body that is analogous to the experience of reading a book" (ibid.). Moreover, Groys makes clear that this concept of self-imposed oblivion permeates the viewer's general sense of immediacy, most notably stating that "one is also oblivious to the material body of the computer itself, to the cables attached to it, the electricity it consumes, and so forth" (ibid.).

According to Groys, this notion persists in exhibitions that mimic conventional, frontal engagements with the viewing screen. Groys notes that the tendency to remove oneself from engaging with the immediate surroundings persists – the encounter with a standard exhibition monitor necessitates that the viewer "individually confront[s] and contemplate[s] the exhibited art objects" (Ibid.). For Groys this notion is problematic – the result of such encounters is a lack of engagement with the immediate space, despite the movement afforded to the viewer. The result is that the viewer "overlooks the totality of the exhibition space, including his or her own position within it" (Ibid.).

Groys notes that screen-based art installations on the other hand, by their very make up, insist upon a communal reading that inextricably links each visitor's experience with the presence, or indeed, bodies of other simultaneous visitors, stating that the "visitor thus finds his or her own body exposed to the gaze of others, who in turn become aware of

this body” (Ibid.). Essentially, as the art installation transforms any given public exhibition space into an individual artwork, it presents an opportunity to “reveal the materiality and composition of our world” (Ibid.).

It is the screen as part of the art installation that therefore provides a key component to this sense of unravelling the solitary self-oblivion for Groys. It is the viewer’s mobility or itinerary engendered or facilitated by these works that allows them to supplant the conventional, solitary engagement. Moreover, this mobility in relation to the viewing screen presented within art installations will encourage viewer’s access to their material parameters, or its “hardware, the stuff from which they are made” (Ibid.) ensuring a transition from the solitary screen presenting itself as “an opening, as a window into the virtual, immaterial world of pure, floating signifiers” (Ibid.).

Herein lies the utility of this reference with regards to this research and the notion of the emancipatory obliquity provoking criticality towards the viewing screen in the viewer. If Groys’ notion that the individual screen user’s self-oblivion presents a distance between user and immediate material surroundings is accepted, then the screen-based art installation presents a model for emancipatory obliquity by emphasising the spatial aspects that comprise the work, positioning the viewer so as to acknowledging the materials and objecthood that comprise the art installation.

Another key example of emancipatory obliquity in relation to this research is Penelope Haralambidou’s digital architectural model restaging of Alan Resnais’s ‘Last Year at Marienbad’. Entitled ‘Déjà vu: Restaging Resnais's Last Year at Marienbad’ (2009) (Fig.23), it provides an outward trajectory of this problem of designing an optimal viewpoint.

The work is an abstract paper model of the Baroque hotel within which Resnais's film is set – each surface providing a projection that disregards a typical singular flat viewing screen surface.

In Haralambidou's work there is no sense of a prescribed view, instead the work proposes viewer circumnavigation of the work as the mode of engagement. The work's presentation upon a table surface also contributes to this nondescript, self-led engagement with the work, in that its various surfaces and planes of the model are presented to the viewer simultaneously. This aspect is further supported with the work's representation, as scenes from Resnais' film are presented a-chronologically, disregarding a sequential narrative in favour of a temporal simultaneity that provokes the act of circumnavigation by insisting that there is no sequence with which to view the work – everything presented in the work occurs at once.

To this end, I would consider 'Déjà vu: Restaging Resnais's Last Year at Marienbad' verges on portraying this sense of an emancipatory obliquity that this practice-led research has tried to cultivate. Here, the mobility afforded to the viewer is an open invitation – there is no prescribed position that speaks to an optimal position for viewership. Instead the viewer opts to move around the work at his or her own whim, even to the point of viewing the reverse of the model.

I hesitate to name this work as a total example of the emancipatory obliquity that this research project attempts to present its viewer - one that leads to a critical realignment and reappraisal of the viewing screen. However, as the work primarily centres its encounter on its fragmented representation of the different aspects of narrative within the film, it cannot be considered a realisation of this project's concerns.

Certainly, aspects of the typical screen encounter are probed here, with its fragmentation, abstraction and simultaneous depictions a clear concern for the artist, though as they are companion to other conceptual concerns, namely a close interrogation of Resnais' film, they do not provide the obliquity necessary to critically re-appraise and re-align the viewing screen. That said, this work denotes a viewing condition that comprises a crucial aspect of emancipatory obliquity – the opportunity to provide viewers with a transgressive mobility that allows a critical appraisal of the viewing screen to arise.

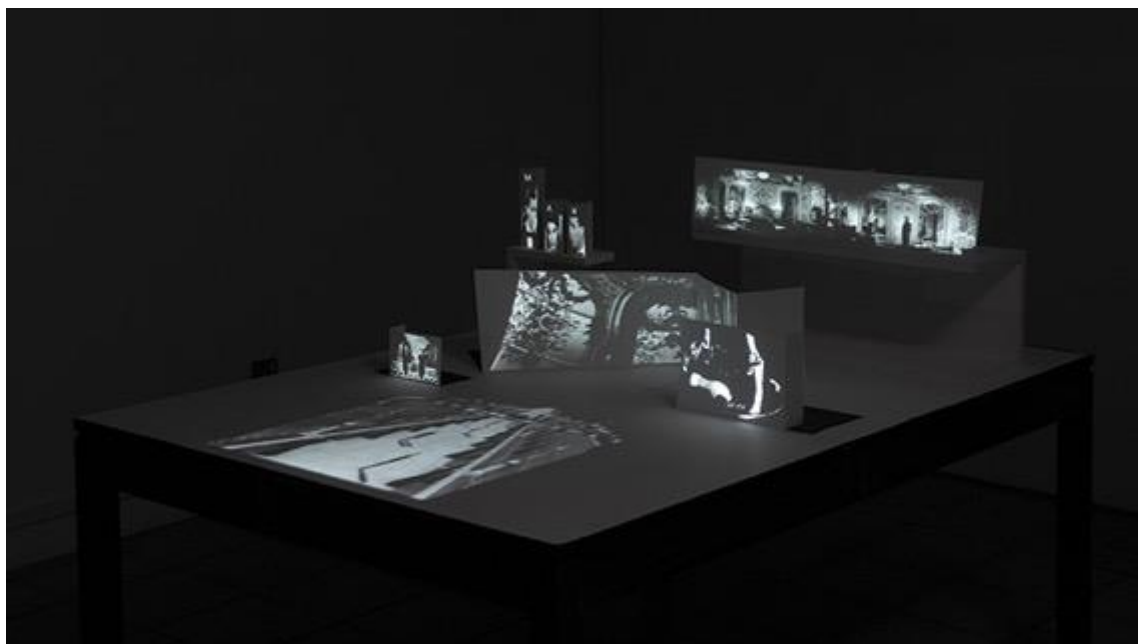


Fig. 23: Penelope Haralambidou, 'Déjà vu: Restaging Resnais's Last Year at Marienbad'
(2009), digital architectural mode

Transgressive mobility

Transgressive mobility, or a mobility that incentivises engaging with aspects of the viewing screen that are typically hidden or constitute the screen's illusionary make up, such as the rear of the screen or the technical aspects that comprise the work, is a key route to incentivising emancipatory obliquity in this research's practical outcomes.

Practical experiments drawing the viewers' attention to the reverse side of the screen have been a frequent component of this investigation, admittedly without appreciating the vital role it may have regarding achieving emancipatory obliquity in the initial stages of experimentation.

Outcomes such as 'Lean experiment' (2015) (Fig. 24) present the rear of the viewing screen to the audience, with the screen surface pointed directly towards the wall that the work leans against. This wilful omission, and the subsequent direction of the viewer to that which would typically be exterior to, or concealed from screen viewership, is what constitutes this notion of transgressive mobility. Doubts are cast as to the authoritative nature of the screen in these works, emphasising to the viewer that the screen and its representation are, in fact, fallible. Transgressive mobility therefore situates itself as directly oppositional to sentiments outlined by Barthes in this chapter's opening section. Barthes' argument that the pure notion of the irreversible, incorruptible screen is transgressed by rendering the hidden aspects of the screen visible, leaving its authority similarly subverted.

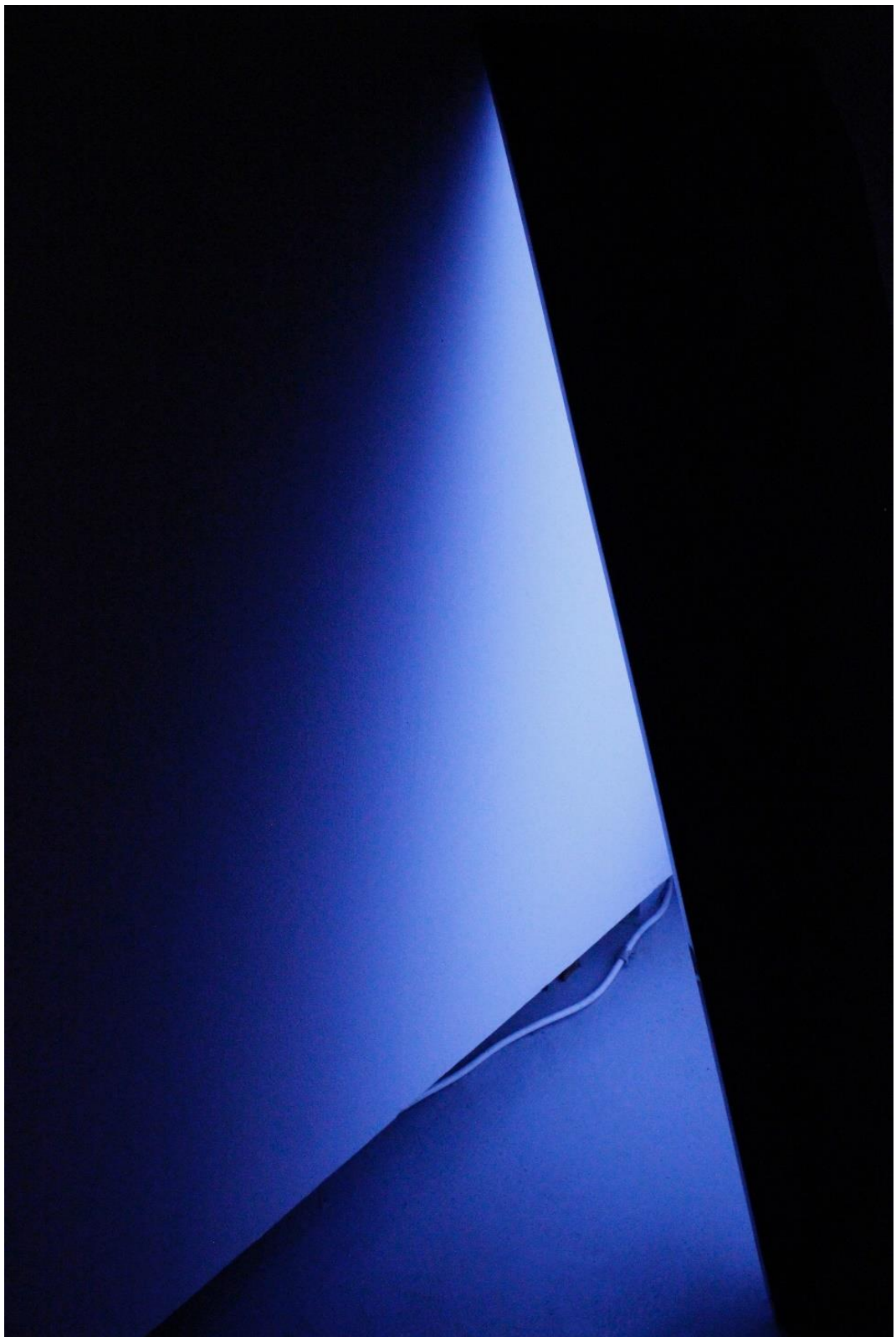


Fig. 24: James Quinn, 'Lean experiment', (2015) video installation

This exposure of the typically inaccessible, reverse of the screen speaks to works such as Cerith Wyn Evan's 'TIX3' (1994) neon sign (Fig. 25). The artist himself mentions that the work was the result of an unintentional entrapment within a space between two escape doors in which viewers ought not to go themselves. The position alluded to here, though in some way transgressive, is one of a permitted access to an object or representation that the viewer is not necessarily looking for. The question of movement involved in relation to the work requires a conceptual sensitivity – though experienced in a frontal, wakeful manner, the work carries with it a weight of precisely the reverse of what is seen.

With regards to other examples of transgressive mobility present within this practice-led research, the 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (Fig. 26 and 27), as detailed in the previous chapter again proves useful. The aim of the 'Untitled Research Exhibition' was certainly, as previously established, to draw the viewer closer to the objecthood of the screen.

However, this occurs in tandem with the notion of a transgressive mobility around these installed screens. This exhibition established its *mise-en-scène* in the first-floor exhibition area, and the subsequent absence that appeared to the viewer as he or she moved into the second floor of the exhibition was intended as transgressive. Through this movement between the floors of the exhibition, viewers could access the reverse or the typically concealed aspects of the works, the area of the screen that is largely off-limits in conventional viewing conditions. In this way, the installation proposed that transgressive mobility is an effective example of an emancipatory obliquity in the screen viewer.

Feedback regarding the work outlined that the viewer's mobility towards the rugged, perhaps even disappointing exposed technical construct of the works incentivised a critical relationship with the viewing screen.



Fig. 25: Cerith Wyn Evans, 'TIX3', (1994) neon sign



Fig. 26 and 27: James Quinn, 'Untitled Research Exhibition', (2018) Project space 1 and 2
(Floor 1/Floor 2), installation detail

The works of Derek Kreckler have led to similarly transgressive models of screen-based viewership. 'Antidote' (2005) (Fig. 28), a multi-screen presentation of various bodies of water, is one such example. Writing about the work, Dominique Angelero states "Possibly it sounds like work you've seen before; an immersive video installation of the nature-is-so-beautiful variety. But the experience it produces is something quite different, subtly disordering your everyday modes of perception in ways that are difficult to shake off" (Angelero, 2006).

Indeed, the artist disorders expected perceptual and spatial encounters by means of careful installation decisions. Projectors are installed at ground level, resulting in intersecting the images with the viewer's silhouette. Moreover, the viewing space for the screens is decidedly restrictive, in contrast to a typical viewing encounter. Lastly, the footage plays at different speeds and scales. What results is a sense of resistance to the typical immobile viewership of screen-based image. Angelero continues: "Home for Kreckler would seem to be that place where perception throws off its passivity and reality becomes a site of potential transformation" (ibid.). Kreckler requires his viewers to reconsider their expectation of viewing intact, immersive imagery, and to re-evaluate their space in relation to those screens. In this manner 'Antidote' is transgressive – the viewer problematises his or her own viewership of the multi-screen installation by existing as a disruptive presence to the typical frontal screen encounter. In Kreckler's piece, there can be no encounter that provides an optimal viewing position without somehow leaving other aspects of the installation fallible or compromised, or partially concealed.

The staging of Emma Hart's 'Lost' (2009-11) (Fig. 29) might also be pertinent with regards to transgressive mobility. The limited spatial plane that accompanies the screened image provides the viewer with a drastically unconventional viewing encounter. As the spatial element of the work restricts the viewer, the key function of the representation is to engage the entire peripheral vision of the viewer, the enormity of the work defying a typical frontal screen viewing encounter. Certainly, the sheer scale of the image refuses to allow the encounter to become habitual, although the screen is presented in a frontal spatial position. Perhaps the transgression in this work is located in the limitation of the viewing space – the closing of the gap between a typical comfortable screen viewing position, in favour of an enormity that resists any sense of optimal, complete viewership. It is the scale of the work, coupled with the limiting plane, that facilitates transgression in this instance.



Fig. 28: Derek Kreckler, 'Antidote' (2005), video installation

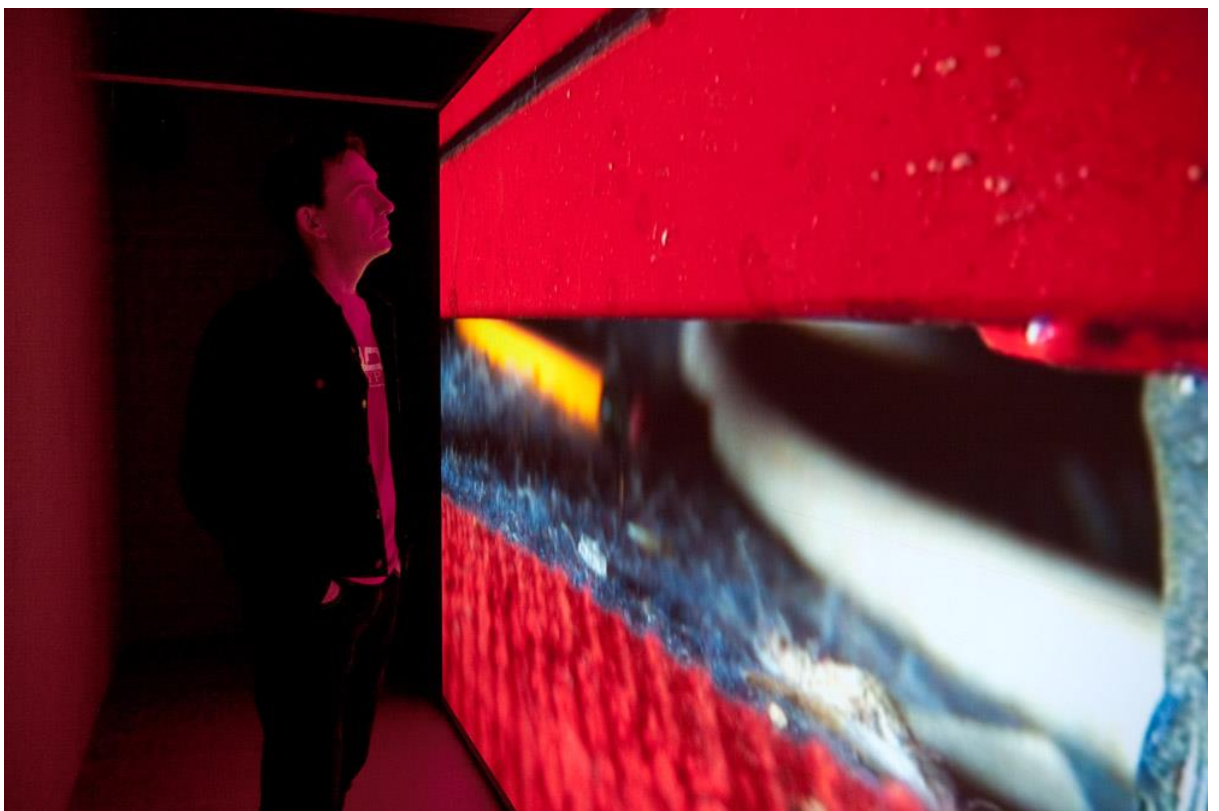


Fig. 29: Emma Hart, 'Lost' (2009-2011) video installation

Mobility, scale, and concealment

Employing scale to incentivise transgressive mobility is similarly an area of concern in my own practice. One research outcome that exemplifies this notion is the video installation 'Corridor' (2018) (Figs. 30 – 34). This work's initial design presented itself as a result of attempting to utilise the full length of a narrow, long exhibition space. This research therefore aimed to generate a site-specific work that triangulated three components: the entire spatial dimension of the exhibition corridor, the dimensions of the viewing screens themselves, and the representations within the viewing screens.

'Corridor' presents four different iterations of the same image across four different scales of viewing screens. Each of these representations is increasingly sharply focused as the viewer moves along the corridor, with the smallest screen at the end of the space presenting the representation in full focus. The essence of the work is that only through a spatial engagement with the entire length of the corridor can the viewer access a familiar representation at the end of the space. The tension provoked with an unfocused, blurry image at the corridor's foreground only eases as the viewer ambles along the space, finally achieving access to representation at the furthest point from the beginning of the installation. However, it is the final position of the viewer that provides the necessary destabilisation from typical screen viewership. Returning along the corridor presents the rear of the screens, or the transgressive position that mobility affords the viewer. The work toys with the concealment and gradual disclosure of its representation, with the mobility afforded to its viewer providing a final position of emancipatory obliquity.



Fig. 30: James Quinn, 'Corridor' (2018), installation view



Fig. 31: James Quinn, 'Corridor' (2018), installation view, detail 1



Fig. 32: James Quinn, 'Corridor' (2018), installation view, detail 2



Fig. 33: James Quinn, 'Corridor' (2018), installation view, detail 3



Fig. 34: James Quinn, 'Corridor' (2018), installation view, detail 4

Although the conceptual outline I have just provided motivates the work, 'Corridor' has been met with criticism. Observations as to elements of the work such as the height and position of the screens, or the work's densely interlaced concepts or presumptions regarding a unilateral viewing encounter, have led to the work being considered ineffective. As the viewer returns along the corridor post-engaging with the work, they are confronted with the backs of the screens that once held their gaze. This aspect of the work's transgressive mobility is successful. However, the movement itself is linear and limited – one clear route is taken by the viewer to return to the point at which the installation begins. Admittedly, the mobility present in 'Corridor' is not as strictly limiting as other similar works, such as Bruce Nauman's 'Green Light Corridor' (1971) (Fig. 35), wherein the viewer's movement and experience has been said to provoke a frustration at not being able to "fully control the situation" (Nauman and de Angelus, 2003: 259).

There is a sense that the transgressive mobility presented in 'Corridor' is choreographed, as it is providing a supposed optimal route with which to move and return along the corridor and interact with - or transgress - the works. As such, emancipation cannot occur within the viewer, as proposed by Rancière, as it is generated on this research's terms (or perhaps the nature of architectural make of the space), not from a self-led criticality provoked within the viewer. Nonetheless, 'Corridor' represents an important practical experiment that attempts to achieve emancipatory obliquity by coalescing these disparate aspects of mobility, scale, representation, focus, and a final rupture of typical screen viewership via transgression.



Fig. 35: Bruce Nauman, 'Green Light Corridor' (1971), installation

Kinetic screen

Among some of the more recent practical experiments generated regarding mobility in this research are works that engender the screen object itself as a kinetic element.

Though initially an area not considered as pivotal to this research and its enquiry, the few generated works that incorporate this kinetic dimension have offered essential feedback and discourse with regards to this chapter as a whole. The early thoughts with regards to developing this aspect of the practice came after encountering Dereck Kreckler's work 'Littoral'" (2014) (Fig. 36). Here Kreckler presents the screen surface as a kinetic dimension of the work, rendered mobile via the use of an oscillating fan. The representation presented in 'Littoral' and its associated movement is instead subverted by the kinetic mobility of the surface that it is projected onto.

Practice-led experiments such as 'Gamma' (2018) (Fig. 37) are examples of kinetic screen in my research. In this work the representation in question appears more clearly depending on the technical make up or the angle of the screen presenting it. For instance, in the event that this thesis is being read on a laptop screen, I invite the reader to gently tilt their laptop screen back and forth to acute and obtuse angles in order to view the difference in clarity offered by the now kinetic screen. If the work is being presented on a plasma television or being viewed in a printed format, however, the effect is dramatically diminished, to the point of the work's image seeming concealed.



Fig. 36: Dereck Kreckler, 'Littoral' (2014), video installation



Fig. 37: James Quinn, 'Gamma' (2018), video still

The success of this work is intrinsically linked to the viewer's proximity to or relationship with their screening technology. As the greatest effect with regards to the piece is, as I have just clarified, on a laptop screen, 'Gamma' never established itself as a suitable work to be exhibited publicly. What this work does emphasise is that somehow rendering the screen as a kinetic object may incentivise a critical relationship between the viewer with the viewing screen. Admittedly, handling, or touching the screen in order to access its content is commonplace in the everyday; however, handling the screen in a fine art context in order to access the visual component of the work is decidedly transgressive.

'Gamma' shares concerns with Stephen Partridge's work 'Monitor' (1975) (Fig. 38), in which the artist presents the video screen as a self-aware article, achieved through a series of self-recording and self-depicting images. There is no time delay between the featured transitions, and instead the viewer is confronted with an infinite translation of images within images. It is within these conditions that the work probes the physical restrictions of the monitor, with the artist's hands rotating and guiding the subsequent reflections. The work speaks of a certain awareness as to the structural qualities of the screen, and the implications of a physical adjustment or disruption upon it.



Fig. 38: Stephen Partridge, 'Monitor' (1975), video installation

A.L Rees writes that:

Monitor goes further as it de-realized the object - the monitor itself - on which the viewer (and the maker as performer) is watching the work. An active diagonal line across the framed space, repeated in the chain of monitors, is now dynamic rather than assertively flat. The logic of tautology or self-embedded system us at the core of both pieces, but this philosophical weight is carried with ease - not least by mapping such formal concerns onto the viewer's activity and space (Rees, 1999).

Certainly, this notion of the dynamic diagonal harks back to Modernist painting practices – Mondrian's famous rejection of diagonal lines in his works, and the works of other painters such as Van Doesburg, citing them as condemnable, unnatural occurrences. Perhaps, by dislocating, disorientating, and deconstructing the essential horizontal and vertical structural values of the screen in 'Monitor', presenting them instead as dynamic diagonal marks of space and perception, the work becomes a potential site for generating obliqueness in the viewer with regards to the screen.

The other primary example of the kinetic screen in this practice-led research presents a perpetual physical rotation of the viewing screen that does not require any element of viewer interactivity but attempts to instil the same sense of a deconstruction of frontal viewing screen encounters for its viewer. The work in question, 'Pines' (2018) (Figs. 39 - 42), features a large dark exhibition space with a slowly rotating screen presented as the sole focal point in the space. Whereas previous iterations of kinetic works involved relational qualities, this work presents the viewing screen as an object in perpetual, autonomous motion. Here the typical frontal reading of the screen is replaced with a

shifting orientation, no optimal or comfortable access provided to the viewer.

As simple as this structural destabilisation may have been in terms of the work's preliminary rationale, the resulting feedback was decidedly complex, including feedback that will lead into the thesis next chapter's concerns. Firstly, as this work was exhibited within an extremely dark space, and with the screen's relatively small scale within this space, the resulting effect was that the viewing space itself felt somehow censored, or absent. Secondly, the screen itself perpetually shifts back and forth between destabilising the viewing screen via inverting its orientation and presenting it in its typical orientation. Lastly, the work's subject matter provided viewers with another element that further complicated the prior reading of scale, space, and orientation.

The resulting effect of all these different elements in the work is decidedly complex, perhaps to its detriment. Here, the back and forth between the rotating of the image in the work allows viewers to move through the cycles of typical identification with the viewing screen then an absolute rejection. This is complicated further as stabilisation within the frontal encounter with image occurs alongside a persistent destabilisation of viewing space as a result of the absence, owing to its sheer darkness. These shifts back and forth between aspects of stability and destabilisation in the work result in what was described to me in a critique of the work as a pulsation: by generating a work that simultaneously provides viewers with encounters that shift back between contradictory elements, the work therefore pulsates between its various conceptual sensibilities.

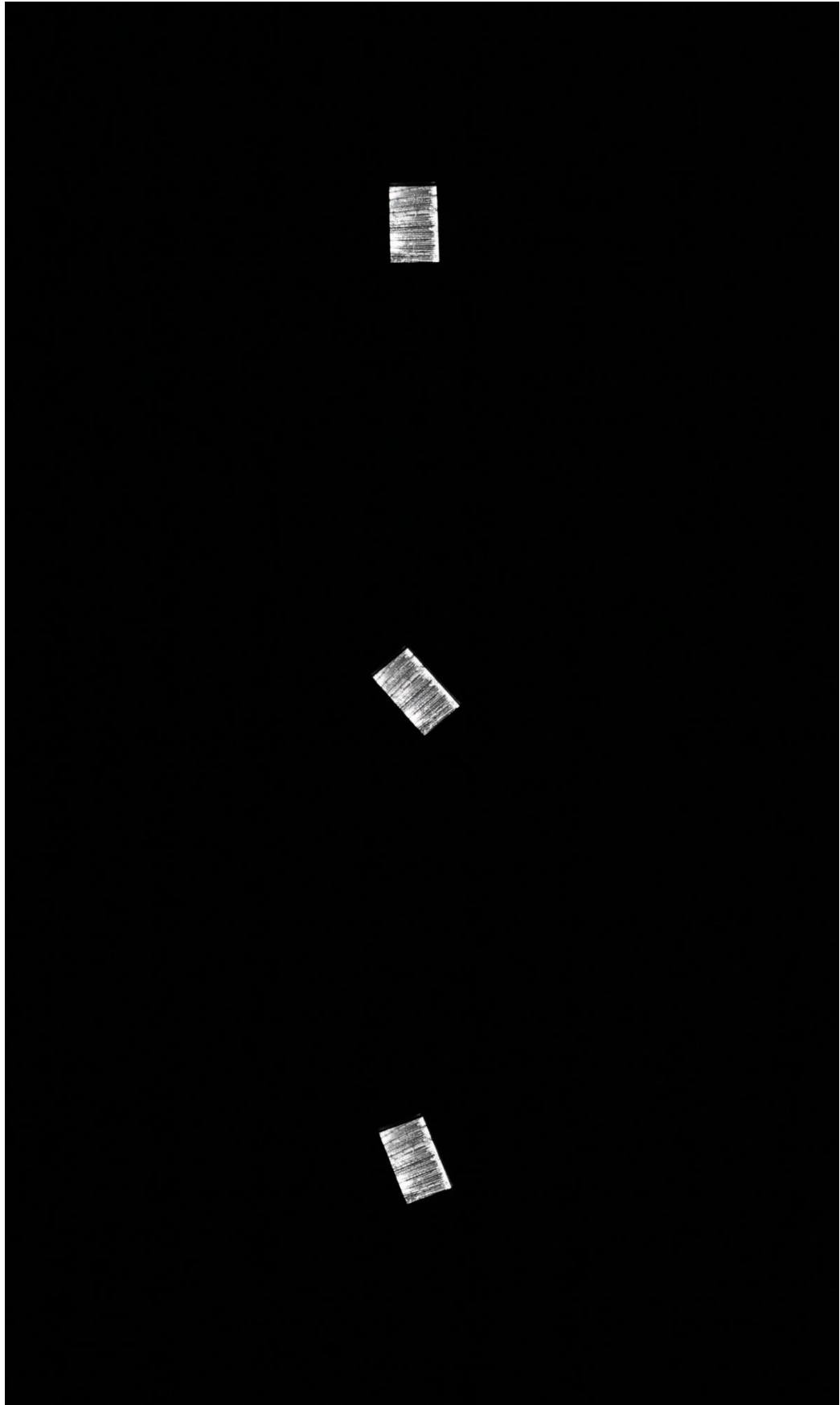


Fig. 39: James Quinn, 'Pines' (2018), installation view, photo: Jeanette Bolton Martin

The one notion that remained highly problematic in this work was its chosen object of representation – the image of a regimented series of pine trees. The rationale behind the use of this image was, from my perspective, to emphasise the kinetic aspect of the screen by depicting a subject with a clear vertical sense of compositional values: perpetual rotation of the viewing screen would dramatically undermine this image, rejecting habitual viewing behaviours, and thereby provoking obliquity.

The resulting effect of this image however, particularly when considered alongside this notion of a pulsation between the work's other elements, was something I had not predicted. Here, the depiction and subsequent effect of the depicted pine trees on the viewer became a point of tension within the audience. Here, the incipient threat of the monochrome imagery, the apprehension or anxiety that something might occur within the representation, then exaggerated and even multiplied in the pulsation between the work's other elements left viewers feeling disturbed and occasionally threatened.

Naturally, instilling this sense into my viewer is far from my research aim. Here, any attempt to cultivate an emancipatory obliquity with 'Pines' kinetic perpetual motion is married to the viewer's response to the image apparent within. Fostering a critical engagement with the viewing screen itself, as opposed to the representation present within, has been a constant issue of contention within my practice, and as such 'Pines', for all of its experimental kinetic developments, can only partially address this research project's aims.



Figs. 40 - 42: James Quinn, 'Pines' (2018), video stills

Summary

This chapter has been concerned with establishing the problematic, authoritative nature of the frontal, habitual, immobile screen viewing condition. In order to validate visual artworks that contest this notion, this chapter has developed a theoretical framework - namely introducing the concept of an emancipatory obliquity – to incentivise a form of viewer mobility that challenges the typically immobile frontal viewing screen encounter.

Emancipatory obliquity is a viewing condition that remains sensitive to a specific ruleset. Directing, authoring or purporting a supposed optimal mobility within which to view my research outcomes stultifies the viewer, reinforcing his or her role as a passive recipient in viewing screen encounters. Instead, the work incentivises a holistic mobility that allows viewers to reach an obliqueness in relation to the viewing screen based on their own personal experience. The chapter has demonstrated how the various research outcomes presented here have attempted to reach this notion of an emancipatory obliquity, perhaps most effectively cultivated in the sense of a transgressive mobility – an oblique position that simultaneously destabilises notions of authoritative immobility in typical viewing screen encounters, whilst allowing them to engage with the hidden, concealed components or makeup of the screen. Here emancipatory obliquity addresses one of the key aims – the critical re-appraisal and re-alignment of the viewing screen via viewer mobility.

This relative success of the mobile aspect of practice still comes coupled with issues. Many of the research outcomes that explore a transgressive mobility do not quantify the viewer's engagement with the representation featured within the viewing screen. The

dimension of the research's imagery, or how imagery might best be deployed to reach this research project's aims has proven to be a problematic dimension throughout the project's chapters thus far. Finding a position for representation to sit alongside this requires considerable deliberation. The next section of this thesis must therefore quantify and qualify the difficulties with representation this project has faced with the problematic use of images, and the critical steps taken to quantify and qualify the wide array of outcomes generated throughout the course of the project.

Chapter 4: The Problematic Image

Reaching some form of meaningful analysis with regards to the presence and function of image in this research is paramount at this stage of the thesis. In prior chapters this issue has been postponed as subsidiary at that stage of writing. It now falls to this chapter to use a series of practice-led research outcomes to illustrate the ongoing issues presented by the image in this research.

Range

Image, quite naturally, is intrinsically linked with screen viewership. In the context of this research however, the role of image is further complicated. When image is employed in an attempt to incentivise critical engagement with the viewing screen structure itself, not the object of representation displayed within, complications occur. This chapter's eponymous 'problematic image' refers to the difficulty this research has had with separating a need for an engagement with what is being displayed on the screen.

Frequent feedback has seen the images present in my works deemed 'too engaging' to encourage a critical engagement with the formal aspects of the works. Such an encounter speaks to a typical viewing regime of content over form, and thereby is detrimental to this research's objectives. Herein lies one of the major contestations of the role of image in relation to this research project: to what extent might the image delivered by the screen in my artworks run counter to the overarching research aim of a critical re-appraisal or re-alignment of the viewing screen itself? What this chapter demonstrates is the various theoretical inputs and approaches to imagery in the practice, ultimately providing a trajectory from more problematic practical experimentation with image

towards the most suitable, or a less problematic mode of representation for this research's aims.

Content and structure coalescence

Initial experiments in my research sought to outline a mutual, reflexive relationship between that which was displayed on the screens, and the screen structure itself. As such, Dan Hays' practice-led research and thesis *Screen as Landscape* (2012) was one of the project's nascent influences. What was of note was the approach Hays had towards a conceptual sensitivity between image depicted in his works, and his overarching research aims.

In this body of practice-led research artwork, Hays' agenda interrogates two research properties – the digital screen and landscape – positing that the technological development and ubiquity of the former threatens established perceptual and spatial values in landscape works (Figs. 43 and 44). Hays posits that “The screen must be landscaped to counter the screening of landscape – the supplanting of atmospheric, ambiguous, and multisensory encounter” (Hays, 2012: 5). It is through these sentiments that Hays creates his works: “Broadly speaking, the paintings attempt to reconcile the contrasting visual qualities of viscous paint on canvas and the televisual image, representing in oily pigmented mud the screen's interior light” (Hays, 2012 :10).



Fig. 43: Dan Hays, 'Colorado Snow Effect 5' (2008), oil on canvas, 122 x 162cm



Fig. 44: Dan Hays, 'Colorado Snow Effect 9' (detail) (2010), oil on canvas

Hay's project not only outlines the screen as a key object of study but examines the dissolution of essential perceptual engagements with landscape artworks and images as a result of screen viewership and the screening interface itself. The subsequent process of, in the artist's own terms, 'landscaping' the screen, exemplifies a research aim that acts to triangulate the viewer, screen, and landscape, around one another, ultimately seeking a reparation of sorts between them.

Hays' works and research are a useful example of contemporary arts practice interrogating the viewer-screen paradigm; the shared conceptual goal of the image and format of his works are noteworthy with regards to my own practice. The provocation at the core of Hays' works is the merging of this inefficient relationship between the perceptual constraints of screening technologies depicting landscape, and the conceptual characteristics of landscape itself. The resulting works balance the screen format and its image or representation – at once presenting characteristics of both, running parallel to the inner workings and contrasting ethos of either party. It is this balanced meeting point in Hays' research that allows for a demarcation between his research and my own. Hays' artwork's images and concepts act harmoniously to meet his research aims. My research seeks to divorce these two properties and ultimately foster criticality towards to the screen format or structure, not its image. Provoking this separation, or a critical reading of screen structure prefacing that of screen content, has guided various acts of experimentation in my practice research. One such attempt has been the exploration of the concept of distantiation.

Distantiation

Bertholt Brecht's essay 'On Chinese Acting' introduces 'Verfremdungseffekt' or 'the distancing effect' as a performative technique that subverts passive or unconscious viewership of aspects of theatrical productions. Brecht describes the technique as "playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play. Acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience's subconscious" (Brecht, 1961: 130).

For Brecht, *Verfremdungseffekt* therefore became a form of activism, with techniques such as breaking the fourth wall and addressing the audience, gesturing to the fictitious nature of the play, thereby highlighting the circumstances that allowed for his characters to be subjected to wrongdoing. It was through this technique that the audience might question the injustices on a larger scale and even seek to make changes that might prevent them from occurring in their everyday. Ultimately Brecht's subversion of the familiar theatrical viewing context allows for a critical, objective position to form within the viewing audience.

Moreover, Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* has proven itself to be a fertile technique employed in fine art practice. In her 'House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home' series, Martha Rosler introduces images of war into the typical American household (Figs. 45 and 46). The collages are composed in such a way as to heighten their sense of belonging, as opposed to imposing their presence upon the household context. It is this confrontation within the everyday that encourages a different reading of conventional images. Rosler

states that “I aim for the distancing (ostranenie, the Verfremdungseffekt), the distantiation occasioned by a refusal of realism, by foiled expectations, by palpably flouted conventions” (Rosler, 1977: 366-9).

Appropriating this term ‘distantiation’ held the key to refining developments in this research practice. When synthesized into this research, Brecht’s performers and the stage are replaced with image and screen respectively. The role of the presented image therefore would be to provoke a distantiation designed to draw attention to the formal aspects or confines of the viewing screen, preventing viewers from a mutually exclusive engagement with screen-based image. Subsequently, viewers’ expectations and habits of screen viewership would be upturned, ultimately leading to a critical appraisal of the screen structures that delivered these images.



Fig. 45: Martha Rosler, 'Cleaning the Drapes' (1967–72) from the 'House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home' series, cut-and-pasted printed paper on board.



Fig. 46: Martha Rosler, 'Balloons' (1967-72) from the series 'House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home', cut-and-pasted printed paper on board.

Distantiation in practice

The earliest example of an attempt to employ this notion of distantiation in my own practice is a work entitled 'wave slip' (2015) (Fig. 47). Here the image present within the screen distorts upwards, simultaneously serving as a disruptive digital edit to the motion present within the image, and additionally, as a gestural device to the screen frame. As the screen nestles itself into the corner of the gallery floor, the work encourages viewer engagement beyond the screen's prescribed format into the space surrounding the work. At its core, 'wave slip' attempts to establish a route from a viewer's typical frontal encounter with screen-based image, towards a perceptual and spatial emancipation in line with the aim of this research investigation.

Following 'wave slip' and believing it at the time to be the best course of action to achieve my research outcomes, experiments with distantiation and landscape imagery would become commonplace. These experiments were bolstered by the writing of Didier Maleuvre, particularly the exploration of the concept of the horizon line. Maleuvre argues that the horizon line represents "an image of human finitude – our limitedness in time space and comprehension" (Maleuvre, 2011: 13).

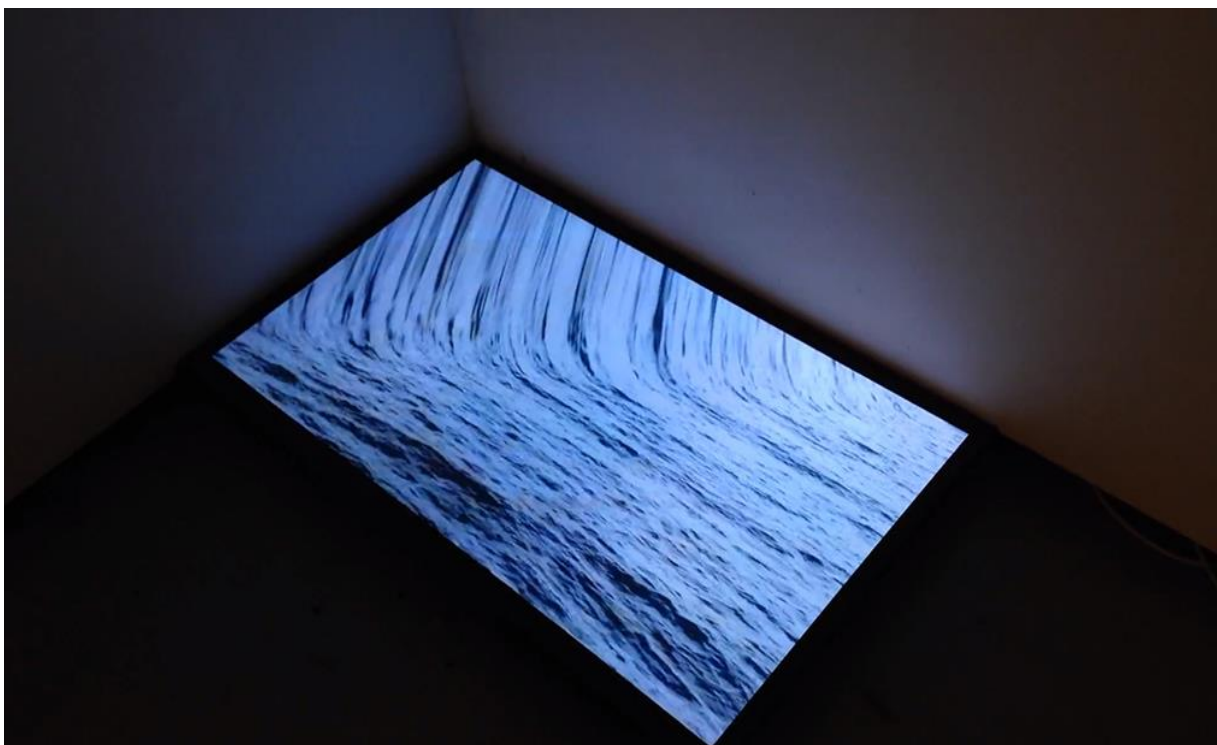


Fig. 47: James Quinn, 'wave slip' (2015), video installation

In this regard, Maleuvre's work appears particularly aligned with the tenets of distantiation, in that it "highlights the subjective, makeshift nature of perceived reality" (Maleuvre, 2011: 2). Maleuvre attempts to establish these aspects by making the horizon viewer "intensely conscious of his perception, his position, his own self ... To perceive oneself perceiving is, inevitably, to look inward; it is to become conscious of the reach of human experience" (Ibid.). Instilling introspection and making a gesture towards criticality in the viewer perception is a trait shared with distantiation.

Furthermore, the works of Jan Dibbets steered these experimental practical outcomes. His 'New Horizon' series of works (Fig. 48), created by conjoining separate landscape locales create a dynamic shifting portrayal of the horizon abstracted by the camera's point of view. Further application of Dibbets' practice alongside this research will be explored at a later stage in this chapter.

The research outcome 'Fake Horizon' (Fig. 49) appropriates these theoretical and visual references, ultimately heightening the sense of artifice of the familiar representation of the horizon line by presenting it as a sharp bisection at the central point of the image. This subversion of the sublime horizon line composition and its associated connotations of distance thereby attempt to reposition the viewer towards a critical engagement towards the screened image; it is in this manner that distantiation occurs.



Fig. 48: Jan Dibbets, 'Land and Sea Horizon' (2007), photograph



Fig. 49: James Quinn, 'Fake Horizon' (2015), video still

Problematic image

It is at this stage that an important distinction must be made: instilling these practical outcomes with such theoretical, conceptual and literary inputs to achieve distantiation began to mis-direct the research. Such practical outcomes intrinsically rely on these supplementary aspects to be considered effective, and as such, the overarching structural concern of the research project becomes ancillary to any imagery presented on the screen. It is in this way that works such as 'Fake Horizon' epitomise this notion of a 'problematic image' in the context of this research. These works steer the viewer towards engaging primarily with the screen's content and its supporting rhetoric, in this case, the notion of the horizon line and distance, as opposed to the screen form delivering it.

The key attributes of distantiation appear to be part of this dilemma: in order to successfully operate, a subversion and reframing of narrative or content must occur. Perhaps this could be owed to the ostensive socio-political agenda of both Brecht's and Rosler's works. Although the aim of my research project may be interpreted by some as 'political' – a re-appraisal of the screen that so frequently delivers messages and images of any topic into the social consciousness, the mode of distantiation present within my research does not employ overtly political imagery, a fact abundantly clear when contextualized alongside Brecht's and Rosler's works.

What can be agreed upon is that my artworks attempt to instill a criticality in their viewer, as Brecht's or Rosler's do, but attempting to achieve distantiation in these works with representations of landscape seems to bypass the core rhetoric of Brecht's theory. With the practice growing further apart from concepts of distantiation, and the choice of

imagery also providing problematic elements to the research, this juncture of the practice was particularly tense. As with any practice-led malaise however, continued experimentation became the route out of this growing disparity between the works I had generated, and the research project's aims.

Joya: Arte + Ecología

As part of attempting to emancipate my practice from some of these problematic theoretical components, I undertook a week-long residency at Joya: Arte + Ecología – a rural off-grid cultural arts institution located in Andalucía, in south-eastern Spain. This interdisciplinary residency provides artists with an opportunity to react to the surrounding environment in order to galvanise awareness of the threatened local ecosystem.

The primary intention of my residency at Joya: Arte + Ecología was to distance myself from some of the pre-existing problematic tropes present in my practice, but also to come to some form of meaningful resolution with the persistent use of spatial and compositional themes of landscape in my own works. The aim upon my arrival was to submerge myself and my practice in an environment with that placed themes of landscape in a visual arts context at the front of their own research endeavours. And yet, as the week-long residency progressed, the environmental issues at the core of the institution's philosophy, as well as the various filming apparatus available to me at the time, began to steer the work being produced. Introducing my research concerns alongside those of Joya: Arte + Ecología certainly generated an intense period of practice-led research, yet retrospectively these works feel uncomfortably demonstrative of the

notion of this research's 'problematic image'.

Works such as 'Cliffs Edge' (2016) (Fig. 50) and 'Sunset Pan' (2016) (Fig. 51) depict a gradual slip from identifiable landscape to a state of abstraction. Other works simply sought to document the duration of the residency in the surrounding landscape, amalgamating separate instances of the local landscape into a singular screen space – 'Pale Layers' (2016 (Fig. 52).

Reflecting upon these works presents a series of problematic issues. For instance, when shared in a summarising critique at the end of the residency, critical feedback noted the distortions present in the works echoing the erosion of the local landscape, thus becoming a literal depiction of the ongoing environmental concerns of Joya. To a certain extent, given the fact that this work was being shown to the staff at Joya, the response naturally aligned with their own institutional concerns. In this regard, the context of the image featured in the work dramatically altered the desired outcome, from this research's perspective. Such context specific responses to the work are largely out of this research's, or indeed an artist's control. To summarise, although such works supported the agenda of the residency, they presented an issue with regards to my own research motivations.



Fig. 50: James Quinn, 'Cliffs Edge' (2016), video still



Fig. 51: James Quinn, 'Sunset Pan' (2016), video still



Fig. 52: James Quinn, 'Pale Layers' (2016), video still

The experience at Joya, though perhaps one of the most intense periods of making during this research project, seemed to compound some of the issues with image present in my work. What the body of work generated in the residency's duration provokes is perhaps precisely what I was trying to avoid with regards to problematic imagery: viewer alignment and engagement with the image located within the screen risked becoming more prominent than the structural aspect of the viewing screen itself. At this stage, I maintained that pursuing themes of landscape would still be the optimal visual source for achieving my research goals, although a clear rationale for why this would be the case still eluded me.

And thus, this thesis steers towards an overarching aspect of the research project that remains undiscussed: the fact that most of the artworks featured employ aspects of landscape imagery. The previous chapters of this thesis acknowledge this element, deferring to this chapter to quantify why the subject of landscape has been a recurring theme in this research investigation and further to this, why certain examples of its use might be considered inherently problematic, and others more pertinent, when weighed against a meaningful resolution to this research's aim of critical re-alignment and reappraisal of the viewing screen.

Why landscape?

As a steadfast visual theme in this research, employing landscape has laid the groundwork for the decision making and critical experimentation in this practice-led research.

Choosing landscape as the primary visual property in this research has provoked various complications, largely revolving around separating the audience from habitual content

absorption in order to foster a critical engagement with the viewing screen structure. The suitability of landscape as my chosen article of representation in this research has often been scrutinised, and as such, this notion may be answered in several parts.

Fallibility, screen artifice, distortions

The subject of landscape is a longstanding lynchpin in the canon of Western fine art history. This is an aspect that this research actively seeks to probe, particularly as concepts such as the sublime landscape are translated into contemporary screening technologies. Claudia Bell notes in *The Accelerated Sublime: Landscape, Tourism, and Identity* that “interchangeability of digital technology” allows screen users to swap, access, view and alter images in perpetuity, resulting in “images of sublime become part of infinite pictorial digital space” (Bell, 2002: 128). This concept is echoed in Stephen Francis Groening’s text *Connected Isolation: Screens, Mobility, and Globalized Media Culture*. Groening introduces the term ‘connected isolation’ to summarise how screen technologies provoke separation from the local in order to achieve immediacy with the global, thereby collapsing and re-ordering binaric historical categories of public and private space (Groening, 2008).

The legacy of the sublime landscape can therefore be infinitely perpetuated in digital screening technologies thus deconstructing the sublime landscape metanarrative. Having ascertained that the notion of a screened sublime landscape image is fallible, closing the gap between the illusionary screened image and the viewer becomes the next clear point to address. As such, this research’s visual outcomes largely incorporate the notion of artifice and the screen. This is achieved in a variety of ways, namely through distortive

techniques, or by complicating compositional aspects of landscape.

This confrontation of the screen's artifice, and the reiteration of the screened content's falsehood, is a topic first explored in various art historical contexts, such as the tale of the contest between the painters Zeuxis and Parrhasios, with their increasingly confounding instances of illusionary *trompe-l'oeil* (Adams and Gruetzner Robins, 2000: 149). Surrealist painters offer a defter articulation of this concept, with artists such as Giorgio De Chirico, Yves Tanguy and Joan Miró exploring the relationship between viewer and spatial perception through their use of strategies such as illogical perspective, abstraction and, transparency in landscape. It is René Magritte's practice that is of particular use here, with works such as 'The Human Condition' (1933) (Fig. 53) wherein the artist emphasises the artificiality of the mode of representation through the representation itself.

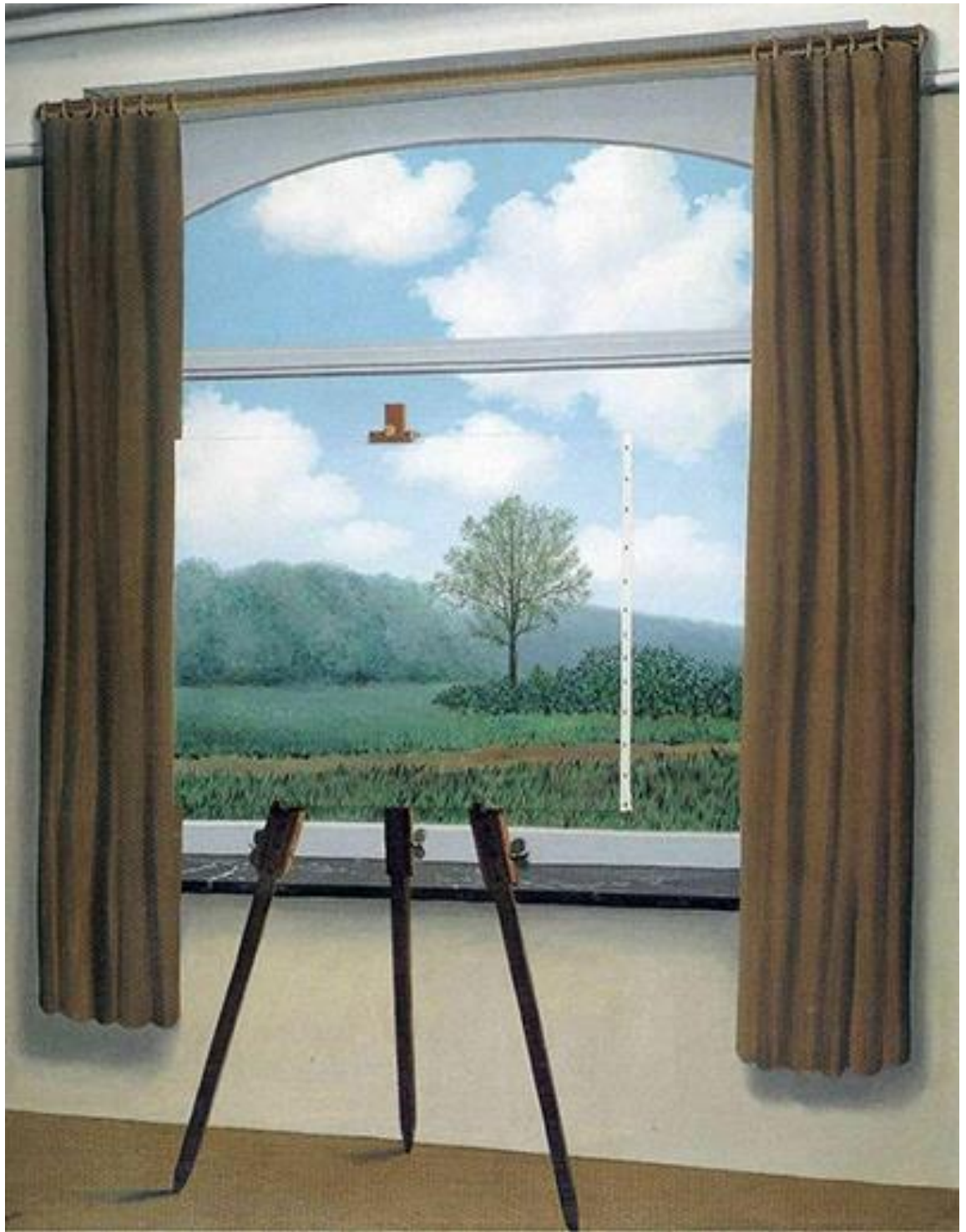


Fig. 53: René Magritte, 'The Human Condition' (1933), oil on canvas, 100cm x 81cm

The *mise-en abyme* at work in this piece presents its viewer with the assumption that part of its representation depicts reality, and the canvas at the foreground of the image presents a continued portrayal of that reality. It is this presumption or preconception with regards to the act of looking that interests Magritte – the canvas and the window in the work are, after all, both part of the same artistic fabrication. Barbara E. Savedoff underlines this notion, stating that “the depicted painting is not only stylistically continuous; the landscape it shows is also exactly continuous with the 'real' landscape seen behind it through the window – even the clouds of the easel painting match up exactly with the 'real' clouds in the sky” (Savedoff, 2000: 35). The crucial point Savedoff makes is ascertaining whether the viewer can “distinguish between 'represented' and 'real' clouds when the two are depicted as so inseparable” (Ibid.). Magritte hereby instils a criticality in the viewer by forcing this confrontation with the meeting point of the artificial and the real in the painting.

As a side-note to this notion of artifice and the screen, the playful symmetry between the shared terminology of ‘landscape’ – at once a visual representation on-screen, and one of the two orientations of the viewing screen, ‘portrait’ and ‘landscape’ is also noteworthy, itself a crucial component of lens-based media post-1839 in referencing Western painting conventions.

This concept is particularly poignant with regards to several of the installation works mentioned previously in this thesis – particularly those that destabilise or problematise standardised orientation of viewing screens, such as ‘Pines’ (2018) (see previous chapter). Magritte’s notion of unwinding the representation from within, alluding to the subjective nature of perception and perspective, is a tool used in my own practical works: landscape,

with its axiomatic tenets of composition, invites a deconstructive approach. Therefore, one primary characteristic employed in works generated throughout this body of practice is visual distortions – aspects of the work that gradually or suddenly behave in an unexpected manner. This may include distorting familiar elements such as compositional values within landscape, and trajectories of objects or figures in landscape, as well as temporal aspects of footage. These distortions seek to destabilise a procedural or habitual encounter with the screen-based image, instead provoking a structural reading of the screen that images are presented upon. The previously listed examples of practice, particularly those generated during my time at the artist residency at La Joya, exemplify such distortions. Distortions presented within my practice are the catalyst for an objective criticality – the screened image here is emphatically artificial, manipulated to an extreme degree.

Regarding the contextualization of these distortive edits in my own works, Daniel Crooks has been a particularly useful point of reference. Crooks often presents a slipping, unorthodox depiction of sequential events – the result is a reevaluation of traditional conceptions of space and time. His work ‘Train No.10 (onward backwards)’ (2012) (Fig. 54) depicts a simultaneous motion – backwards and forwards along a train track. This simple temporal adjustment to his film results in a stasis of sorts. Distorting duration in such a way forcibly removes any sense of sequence from the image - instead, the viewer confronts time obliquely, in a critical, objective fashion.

Rosemary Jackson’s notion of the paraxial is of use here, the zone in which – “fantasy recombines and inverts the real, but it does not escape it: it exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real” (Jackson, 1998: 20) (Fig. 55). Jackson similarly argues that

this reflexive and porous relationship between the real and the unreal elements of the work pave the way for unexpected, strange outcomes to establish themselves.

Jackson's realm of the paraxial therefore casts light on the digital distortions concurrent throughout this research, subtracting an established sense of real-ness associated with the landscape in the viewed image by means of a confrontation with the decidedly fantastical or unreal. Characteristics that appear digitally manipulated steer the viewer towards the confrontation with the fact that the screened image is illusionary, and therefore artificial. Situating the viewer in a paraxial space, and the subsequent critical viewership that follows with regards to the screened image, is key here.

Such distorted depictions of landscape in the research act may also act as a holistic counterpoint to imagery presented on screens in the contemporary every-day, namely screens purporting entertainment, advertisement or personal social media-related images or content. Within the context of this research, the portrayal of a distorted, manipulated landscape operates as a placebo to these everyday images – a recognisable visual article or access point for the screen viewer, only to subvert habitual encounters by operating in an unexpected or unusual manner. The ability to provoke critical positioning in the viewer by means of the landscape imagery in my own artworks begins to take shape here. The distortions in my practice seek to incentivize a criticality in the work's audience, steering the viewer towards a consciousness of the artificiality of the image, and ultimately a sense of incredulity towards the screened image.



Fig. 54: Daniel Crooks, 'Train No.10 (onward backwards)' (2012), video still

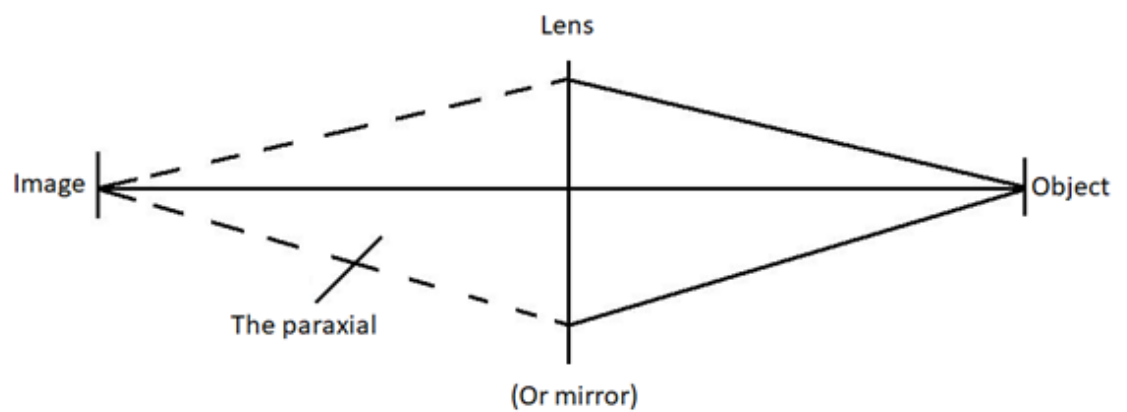


Fig. 55: Rosemary Jackson, Diagram of the Paraxial (1998)

Indeterminacy

Such a practice is not uncommon in conceptual art; Jan Dibbets' practice, notably his 'Perspective Correction' (1967-1969) series (Fig. 56) are a particularly helpful example. These works predominately explore the concepts of illusion, representation, and space, particularly in the photographic medium. The geometrical shapes present in the works, as exacting as they may appear, are in fact three-dimensional illusions photographed from a specific oblique viewing position.

Hanneke Grootenboer appraises Dibbets' work as an anamorphosis presented in reverse (Grootenboer, 2005: 97-98), in the sense that as opposed to historic examples of anamorphic art wherein an image emerges from a distortion or "a chaos of lines and colours". Dibbets' photography is staged in such a manner that the distortion itself requires interrogation. The subtext here is clear: Dibbets is marking a gap between viewer perception (in situation), and representation as offered by the photographic medium. From this gap, questions arise as to the hegemony of linear perspective and its paradoxical nature. This is particularly emphasized in aspects of the work such as its title: where does Dibbet's solicited 'perspective correction' lie? Is the photograph itself the article in need of correction, with its mediated frontal perspectival view? Or perhaps instead the oblique viewpoint, staged by Dibbets in situ, is the article in need of correction. Dibbets' works therefore provoke an indeterminate status with regards to perspective. Accepting the subjectivity rooted in the act of looking at these separate, yet simultaneous views of the work, the "imperfections and deceptions that deform the image we have of our visual field" (Grootenboer, 2005: 99) become acutely prevalent.



Fig. 56: Jan Dibbets, 'Perspective Correction' (1968), photograph

What these points of reference steer us towards is the deconstruction of the supposedly authoritative, absolute truth of viewer perception in relation to representation. By instilling a critical viewership in their audience, artists such as Magritte and Dibbets are attempting to reinvigorate a critical spectatorship that re-aligns the viewer with scepticism as to the nature of the image they are viewing.

These crucial aspects of the use of landscape imagery in my practice, exposing the artificiality of the image by ways of paraxial distortions, ultimately seek to instill an indeterminacy in the viewer. If the landscape image presented within my artworks steers viewers towards such a perceptual indeterminacy, then, incredulity as to its authenticity soon follows. It is within this state of indeterminacy that the viewer is presented with the essential structural truth of screen viewership.

Depth, layering, concealment

As tidily as these triangulated theoretical inputs may have been presented, their execution with regards to practical outcomes has been uncomfortable, presenting problematic areas. 'Västerås Slip' (2016) (Figs. 57-59) is but one example of this concept at work in my research. Regarding the subject matter present in the work, 'Västerås Slip' is a landscape shot from a moving vehicle on a motorway in rural Sweden. This contextual information regarding where and how the image was created is superfluous, however. As explored previously, placing emphasis on the nature or location of the landscape presented within the research outcomes implies the primary engagement should occur in relation to screened image. Instead, 'Västerås Slip', attempts to assert that the specifics of its presented imagery in these works is purely observational – a means within which to

explore the structural concerns of this research project.

Throughout the duration of the piece, an image of a dark landscape from a moving vehicle repeats in a cyclical perpetuity. Each cycle of the work involves a gradual dissolution of compositional values: dark vacancies crop up between the foreground and background of the composition, flattening and bridging these compositional values. The aim of 'Västerås Slip' is to problematise the viewer's perceptual engagement with the spatial aspects of landscape. The notion of the artificiality of the screened image is particularly keen in my works that present a mobile landscape, or of a movement through landscape, as such a movement further complicates perception of themes of distance and space. In many ways, the work resembles a screen-based parallax, with sections of the composition simultaneously emergent from and restricted by the growing dark vacancies in the video – instances of familiarity and points of reference concealed by layered darkness and distortion as the landscape pans across the screen.

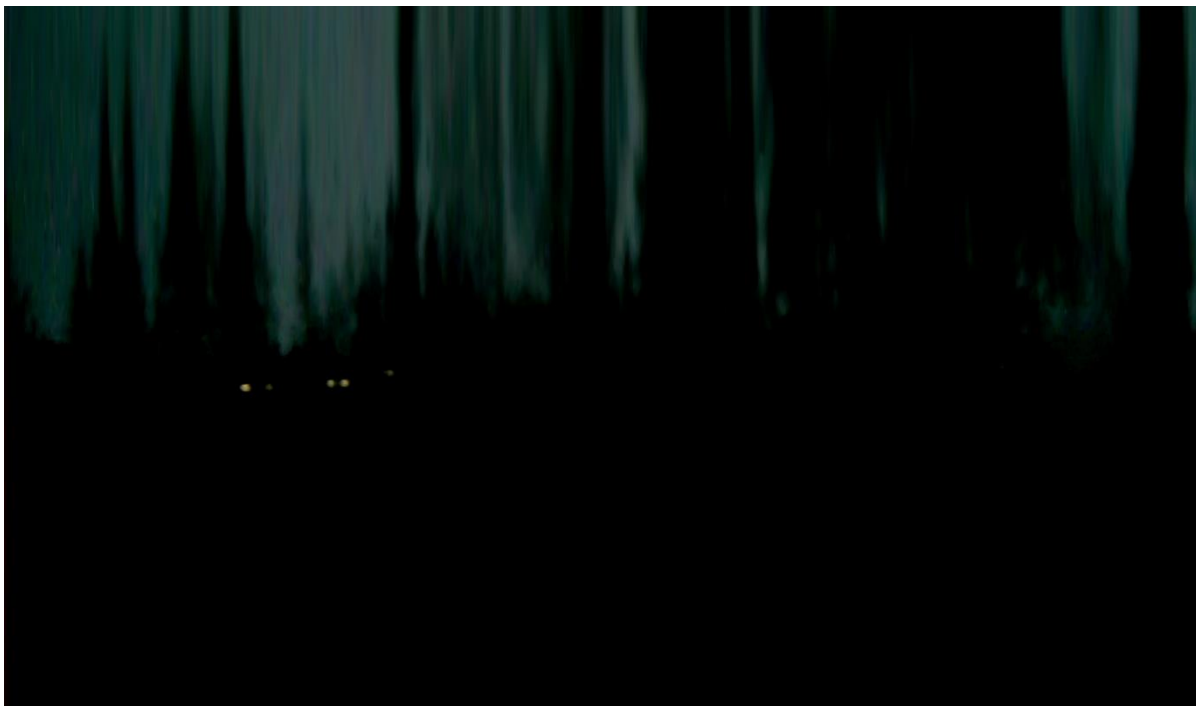


Fig. 57: James Quinn, 'Västerås Slip' (2016), video still



Fig. 58: James Quinn, 'Västerås Slip' (2016), installation view in 'Constellation' group show



Fig. 59: James Quinn, 'Västerås Slip' (2018), Installation view in 'Untitled Research Exhibition' at Norwich University of the Arts

The aim of 'Västerås Slip' appears to be a useful example of a practice-led outcome that attempts to adopt and triangulate artificiality, distortion and indeterminacy. However, the intended reading of 'Västerås Slip' is made decidedly more complex when considering the work alongside Haim Finkelstein's study *The Screen in Surrealist Art and Thought* in terms of the concept of layered depth.

Citing Max Ernst's works, Finkelstein outlines the concept of layered depth as "a function of the process of laying one element on top of the other" or "the juxtaposition of disparate elements taken from distant realities" (Finkelstein, 2007: 118). This perceptive quality is present in "any photographic reproduction of an original photographic collage intended to obliterate the 'seams' and enhance the illusory quality of the work." (Ibid).

One such example of Ernst's work that portrays this concept of layered depth is his piece 'Drum of the Infantry of the Celestial Army Represented Abreast in Their Sunday Best Portrayed Frontally' (1920 (Fig. 60) with its plentitude of contrasting elements serving to dislocate viewers from a literal and figurative absolute or optimum viewing position. For instance, its priest-like figure and obscure fish-forms each cohabit the work, with the latter sitting within a panel-like formal device that crosses a depiction of the land and sky. In this instance, this panel could very well represent a separate image instance, acting to censor or prevent viewership of whatever is located behind it. To Finkelstein, this is how "the work becomes associated with the screen, as a barrier that at the same time reveals and conceals what lies behind it" (Finkelstein, 2007: 148).

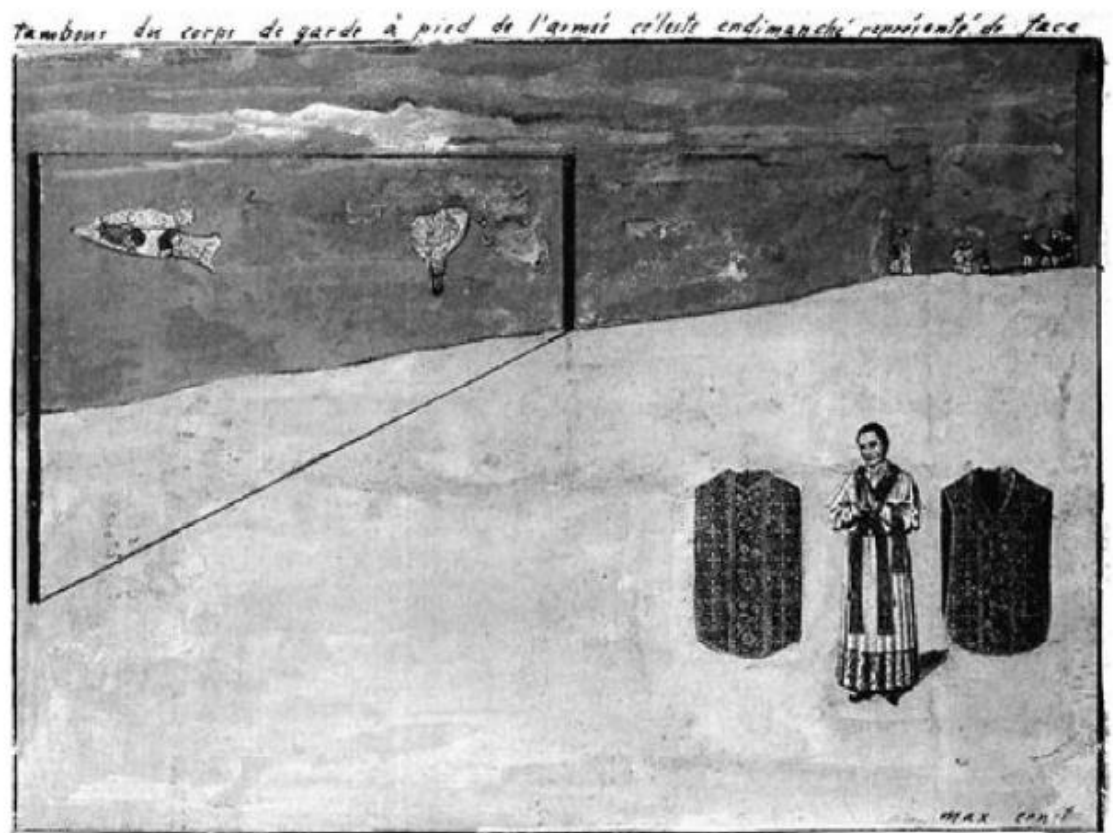


Fig. 60: Max Ernst, 'Drum of the Infantry of the Celestial Army Represented Abreast in Their Sunday Best Portrayed Frontally' (1920)

Finkelstein emphasises this notion of artworks obscuring portions of their representation, turning to the concept of layered depth in Magritte's painting practice to articulate this thought. Here, restrictive qualities of Magritte's paintings are interrogated, notably the layering of imagery in his works, where Finkelstein argues that in works such as 'The Double Secret' (1927) (Fig. 61) "the implication is that the surface of the painting, rather than constituting a transparent windowpane, is itself a kind of screen that partly conceals what may lie underneath" (Finkelstein, 2007: 167). Concealment within the screen space is also articulated in the contemporary works, such as the practice of Lawrence Kavanagh (Fig. 62). These often interlace a series of separate representational spaces, layering these instances with their own rationale to create a *mise-en-abyme* of interrelated interrogations of the subjective nature of visual representation.

The inclusion of the drapery and its subsequent connotation of a sense of concealment-in-motion, or the act of revealing or denying access to that which it conceals, is particularly vivid here. The architectural connotation also is a provocative one: the large curtain is equally at home in the theatre or cinema space. The apprehension of the closed curtain, or a partially obscuring curtain, speaks to the image's pensiveness, and ultimately presents the viewer with a distinction between "the relational space between 'image life', what we make visually of the world, and 'real life', what the world actually is" (Cramerotti and Carr, 2016-2017). A continuation of the concurrent theme of a paraxial tension is clear here: Kavanagh's works provide the viewer with a space in which to enter into a critical relationship with subjective perception, namely by staking the connotative aspects within the artwork's imagery and the inherent artificiality of the artwork against one another.



Fig. 61: René Magritte, *The Double Secret* (1927) 114 x 162 cm

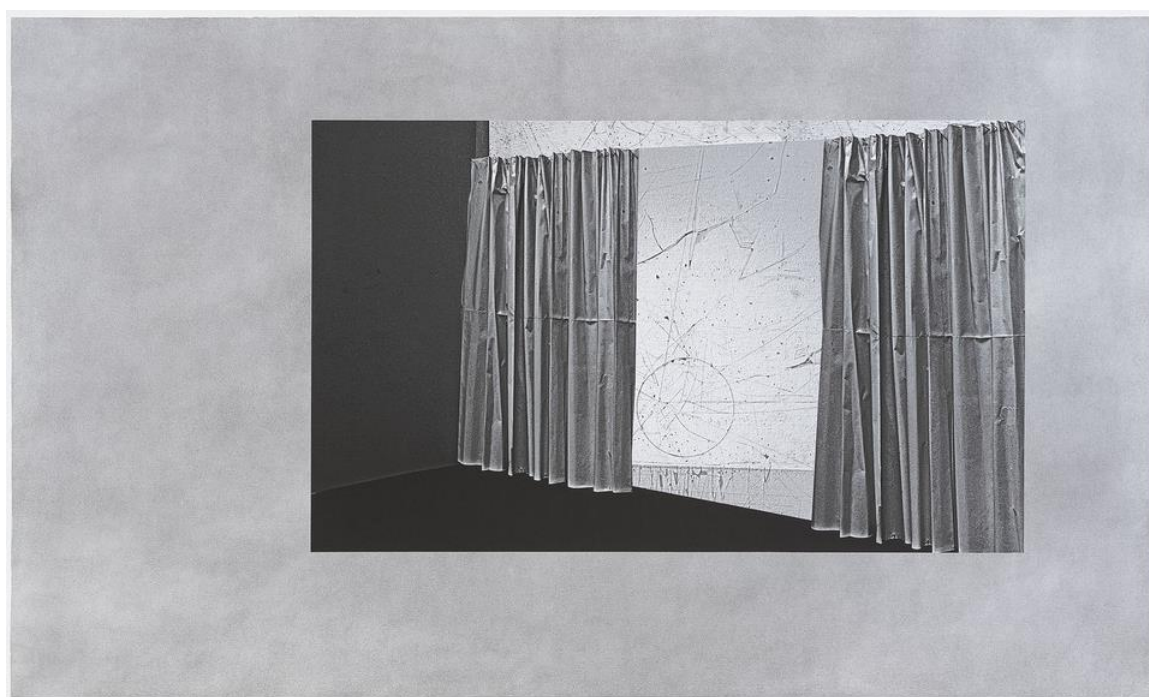


Fig. 62: Lawrence Kavanagh, *'May (Segue)'* (2014), paper, graphite, giclée print,
134 x 222 cm

Effects on interpretation

At this point the problematic area that Finkelstein's concept presents begins to manifest itself. As ideal as the conceptualism behind such works may be, does presenting imagery with connotations of concealment ultimately mislead the practice by inviting the viewer to identify with, or project onto these restrictive areas of the image? Such an interrelation between the viewer and the image leaves us with another problematic image – generated with the aim of meeting this research's aims yet resulting in another image-centred screen viewing encounter.

As if to compound this notion, Finkelstein cites Eisenstein's rationale that only the medium of film can serve as a merging, binding device that filters and presents all juxtaposing separate layered image instances into one truly combined article. The result of such binding is to "dictate a temporal succession, or, in other words, a narrative effected by an eye movement that penetrates the depths of the picture by going through its various layers or the regions lying one behind the other" (Finkelstein, 2007: 119). Finkelstein states that this potential site for a narrative engagement with the layered aspects of a work might therefore "be perceived as exemplifying the attempt to penetrate depth while being blocked at some point or another along the way" (Finkelstein, 2007: 120). At this point, and steering Finkelstein's theoretical input towards my own practice, particularly 'Västerås Slip', the potential issue with such portrayal of a layered depth arises: the subsequent arrival of a suggested or implied narrative between each dark vacancy or layer. Reaching this position where the imagery presented within 'Västerås Slip' ultimately encourages viewers to arrive at an encounter led by an internal or implied narrative is contrary to this research's aims.

These layered aspects of the work have been remarked upon as reminiscent of numinous architectural spaces. Marco Frascari denotes the numinous realm as “a special ambit that defines a holy space and is devoid of moral and rational aspects” and therefore ‘numinous spaces cannot be functionally labeled; they are non-rational spaces where a beatific life can be achieved’ (Frascari, 2017: 84). Citing Andrea Palladio’s villas in Veneto as examples of numinous spaces, Frascari notes that the buildings have a unique propensity to “assimilate time, space, and individuality into one spatial unity ... they are places for reverie, daydreaming, and dreaming” (Ibid.). Translating this concept back towards the critique received regarding ‘Västerås Slip’, comments were made regarding how the numinous spaces generated in the work ultimately generate spaces that invite a form of psychic inhabitation for the viewer, not unlike the layered urban landscape spaces outlined in the photographed urban landscape works of Rut Blees Luxemburg (Fig. 63). This magnetism towards, and subsequent inhabitation within the growing layered vacancies presented throughout the duration of ‘Västerås Slip’, presents another issue with regards to this work and my overarching research aims. The focus here becomes a synthesis between viewer and the space within the screened image, as opposed to the structural trappings of the work.

As stated in the first chapter of this thesis, ‘Västerås Slip’ has been exhibited three times, each involving different technical staging. Staging these works across a range of technological displays, different scaled projections, televisions, wall mounted, and freestanding screens presented this numinous phenomenon to lesser or greater degrees. For instance, the projected iteration of the work, installed as part of ‘Untitled Research Exhibition’ was particularly emblematic of this concept, owing principally to the large scale of the image.



Fig. 63: Rut Blees Luxemburg, 'Cockfosters' (2009) photograph

It is the tension between these concepts of layered depth and numinous space that ultimately proves 'Västerås Slip' to be a problematic image. Indeed, the work provides perhaps the most necessary example and subsequent exegesis for this chapter's eponymous problematic image. Conceived in an attempt to provide viewers with the critical toolset to gain an objective position about the viewing screen, the work primarily seems to serve to further complicate aspects of this goal. Despite this deeper analysis of 'Västerås Slip', the work does remain one of the clearer examples of the attempt to explore artificiality and the screen by complicating depth and layering in landscape, if only to serve as a cautionary tale for the works to follow.

This section has attempted to establish some viable causality between the choice of landscape as the article of representation in this research and the goal of a critical re-appraisal of the viewing screen in viewer spatial and perceptual parameters. The various accompanying theoretical inputs attempt to outline a space within which the practice achieves this research goal.

As with any experimental practice-led research, aspects of this have proven successful, but others less so. Landscape imagery appears to contain the appropriate spatial, perceptual, and conceptual themes that, if appropriately incorporated, interrogated or subverted, in practical outcomes, might tempt viewers towards the structural qualities of the screen delivering the image. What appears to be missing at this stage of the research, however, is the means to successfully steer the viewer away from the screened image as a key article of engagement in my practice.

Collaboration

As the difficulty regarding the problematic imagery in this research persisted, alternative methodologies to combat this malaise were adopted. Collaborative practice therefore provided a useful site to investigate and resolve some of the ongoing issues with the balance between content and form in my works. This small subsection will outline key collaborative efforts that attempted to explore alternative methodologies to meet this research's aims. These collaborative exchanges largely involved introducing limitations to my methodological rationale in favour of an experimental, speculative or discursive methodology. These were self-imposed restrictions, such as removing any personal responsibility for generating the image content of the installation, or (precisely the reverse) focusing solely on the formal parameters of the work. Collaboration therefore becomes the site within which alternatives to the embedded methodological approaches in this research are explored.

Approached by a fellow member of the architecture staff at Norwich University of the Arts, Michael James Lewis, we began a collaboration based on a shared interest in exploring spatial aspects of projected and screened moving image artworks. This collaboration was initially an attempt to generate works that spoke to our respective practical interests. The typical encounter with image, screen and space was refuted here: instead, clusters of fabricated structures invited audiences to re-evaluate their personal space in relation to screened images.

The project's agenda was to refute a habitual encounter with image, screen, and space via a collaborative methodology that favoured speculative, process-led visual practice. In this collaborative exchange I therefore decided to focus solely on offering up video content for my collaborator to experiment with. In this way, I had very little input with the structural aspects of these collaborative installations. Initial works produced sought to marry details within the projected image with wooden rod-like structures in the space preceding them. Line and trajectory within the projected digital image would offset and mirror the structures, acting as gestures that extended a viewer's reading of the two-dimensional image into the three-dimensional exhibition space.

And yet, in the spirit of embracing a material-led, speculative making process, other outcomes of this collaboration were unforeseen. The structures introduced into the space acted beyond their anticipated role: minute details located in the image's periphery suddenly found themselves promoted onto the structure's surfaces, acting (at least apparently) within their own set of temporal values, as well as abstracting from their projected points of origin – particularly notable in 'Test 1 documentation' (2017) (Fig. 64).

Duplicating the projected image produced further results: subtle inversions of core compositional values in the landscape images began to present themselves. In 'Test 2' (2017) (Fig 65) the pale luminescence of the sky is highlighted physically below the earthy colour of the image in some instances. Disordering and deconstructing the core composition of landscape is an opportunity to afford the viewer some degree of criticality with landscape imagery.

'Test 3' (2017) (Fig. 66) is another experimental outcome from this collaborative exchange. The vacancies that result in projecting directly onto a singular panel allow for the cutaway to invoke a totemic presence. The small adjustment in width of the installed structure, from thin rod to wide panel, emphasises the absences – and their varying scale – located around the various instances of image.

Documenting the works through a series of pan and tracking shots also has proved useful beyond simply categorising findings for critical or reflective purposes. Tracking the multitude of surfaces and angles presented in works such as 'Test 4' (2017) (Fig. 67) flattens and condenses the spatial experience offered by the installations, resulting in overlapping segments with ambiguous distance and space.



Fig. 64: Michael James Lewis and James Quinn 'Test 1 documentation' (2017), video
installation detail

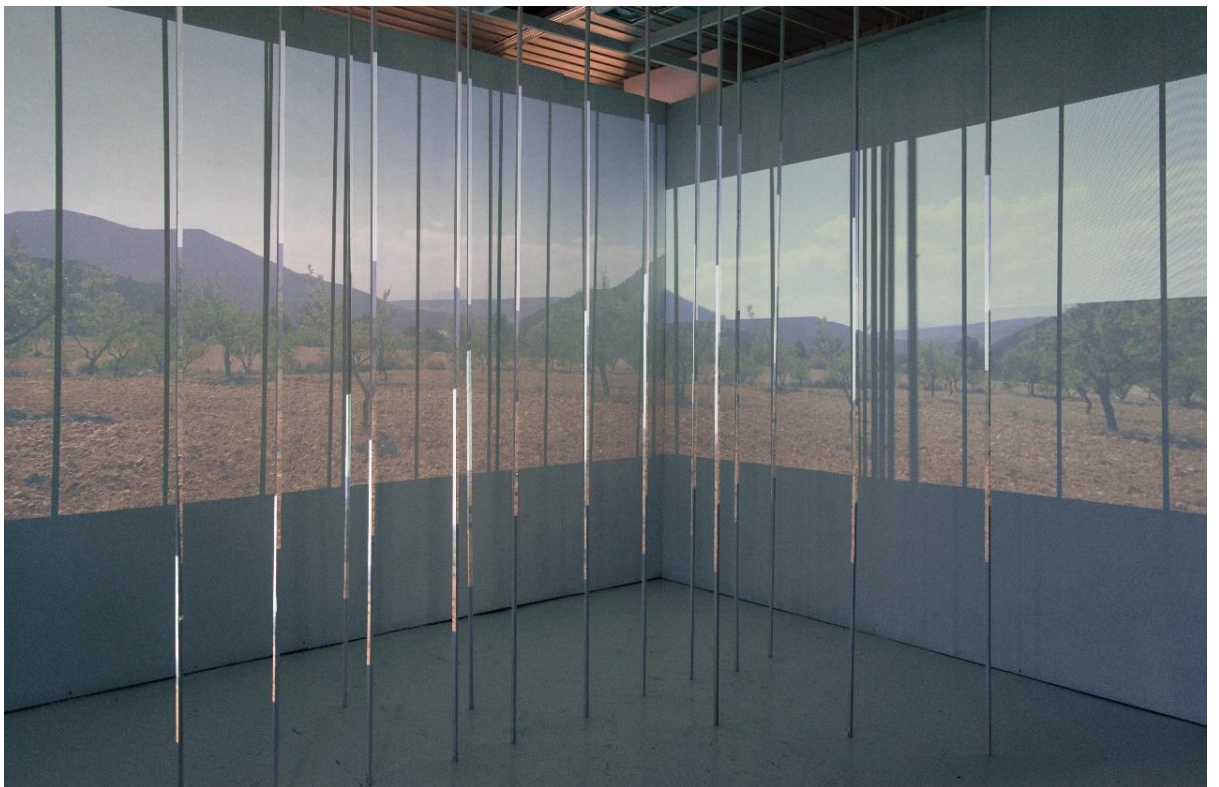


Fig. 65: Michael James Lewis and James Quinn, 'Test 2' (2017), video installation

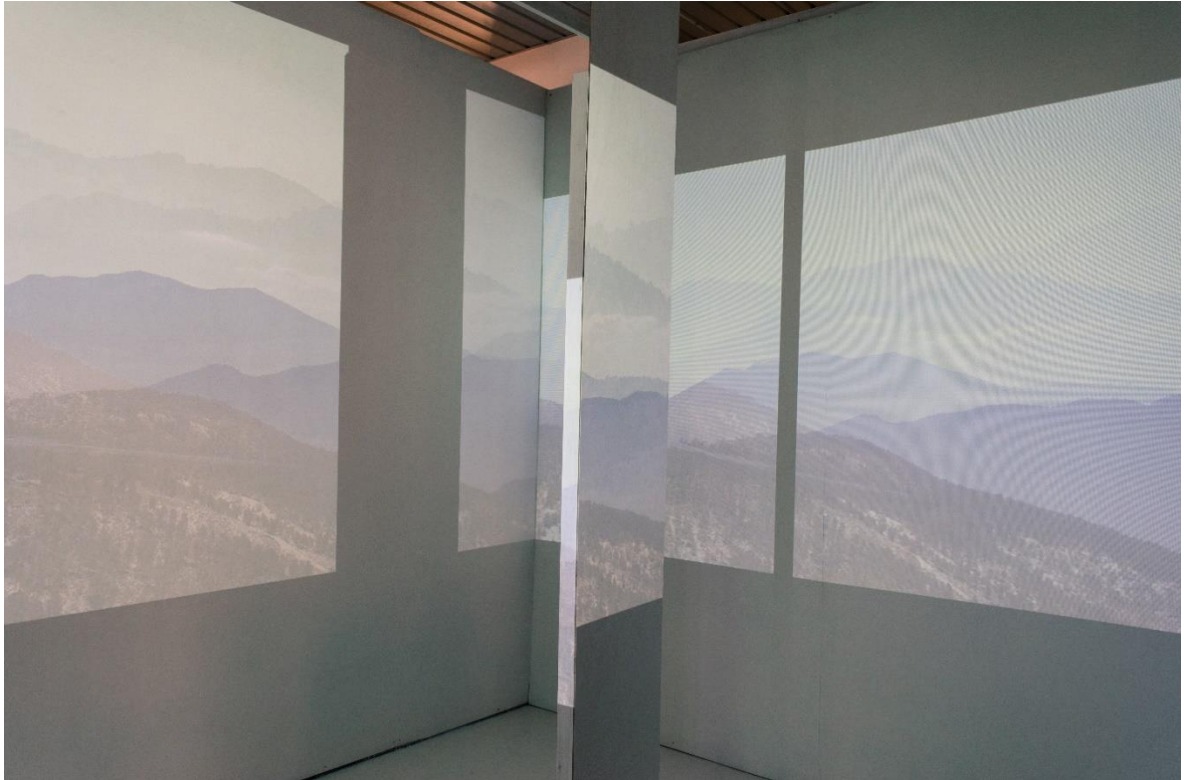


Fig. 66: Michael James Lewis and James Quinn, 'Test 3' (2017), video installation

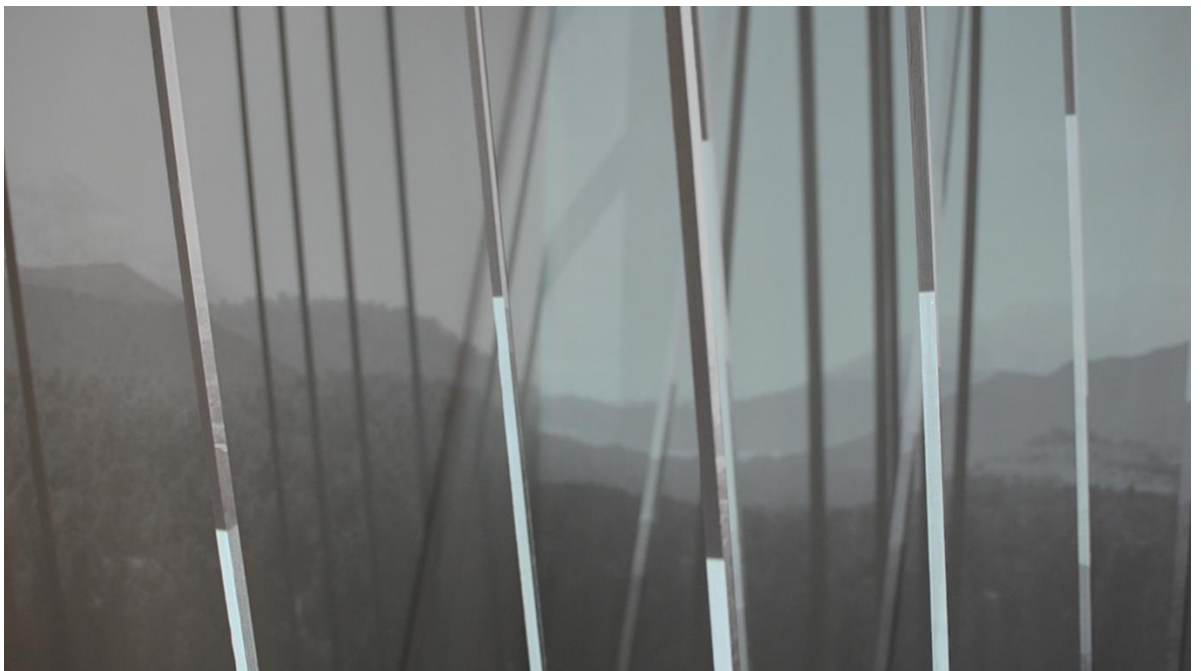


Fig. 67: Michael James Lewis and James Quinn, 'Test 3' (2017), video still

Another collaboration that similarly provided restrictions of my methodology was with a post-graduate student at Norwich University of the Arts, Jeanette Bolton Martin. In a move directly opposite to the work undertaken with Michael James Lewis, the aim of this experimental interaction was to defer all content generation to my collaborator, and for my sole responsibility to involve the staging of the surface, structure, or formal aspect of the works. Outcomes of this collaborative methodology include 'Test A' (2017) (Fig. 68) and 'Test B' (2017) (Fig. 69). Each of these works exemplify a restrictive approach to collaborative practical research. Experiments with various materials, props and screening technologies allowed for a liberating methodological approach that emphasized the staging of screen-based artworks.

As the concept of prioritizing screen structure is an overarching aspect of the practice-led research, adopting this structure-centred methodology felt like a step in the right direction. The resulting works, however, remain tied to this chapter's eponymous problematic image. Although I found my personal contribution to the collaboration closer to the structural concerns at the heart of my own research, the works still provoked a response from their chosen representation. This was confirmed after conferring with my collaborator: as a fine art photographer whose practice focuses on exploring coastal erosion in north Norfolk, these collaborative works served to highlight the shifting, transient nature of the coastal environment. As such, aspects of the work such as the manipulation of the screen's material surface or the dislocated projection frame are subject to a reflexive scrutiny with aspects of the chosen representation. In summary, even in this collaborative scenario, where I contributed solely to the structural trappings or staging of the artworks generated, the issue of the problematic image persists.

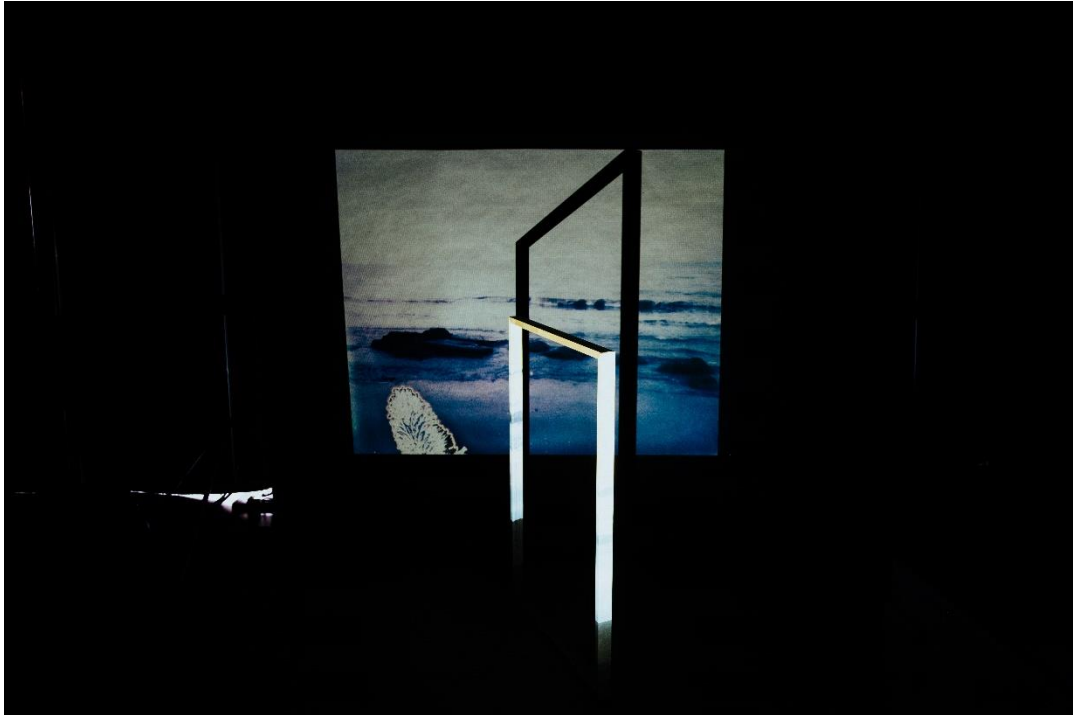


Fig. 68: Jeanette Bolton Martin and James Quinn, 'Test A' (2017), installation

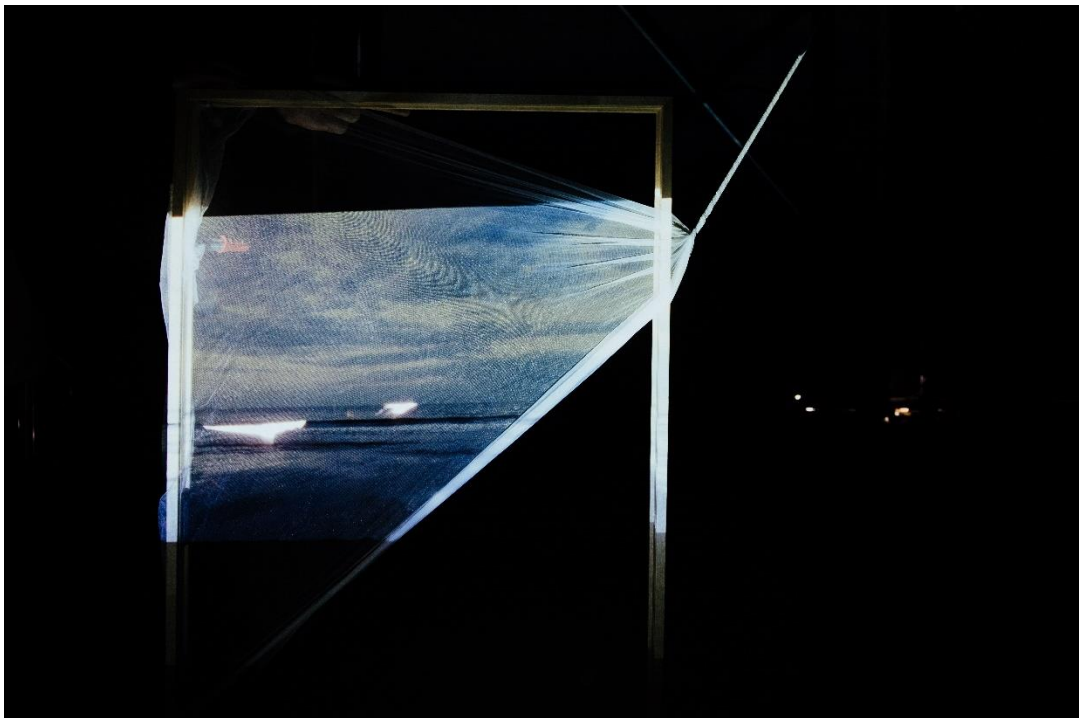


Fig. 69: Jeanette Bolton Martin and James Quinn, 'Test B' (2017), installation

Although these collaborative exchanges may not offer a solution to this research's notion of the problematic image, experimental outcomes still generated the necessary discourse and feedback to develop some form of resolution with regards to this ongoing issue with imagery. Specifically, it was by revisiting a dramatic move towards the absence of the image on screen that ultimately moved the practice towards a reconciliation between these ongoing problematic dimensions.

Screen and absence

The collaborative outcome 'Shenyang Fold' (2015) (Fig. 70) with Ben Fox was perhaps the first example of delving into the tension involved between absence and the screened image. Much like the research outcomes with Jeanette Bolton Martin, the image present in the work was taken by a collaborator in the city of Shenyang in China, depicting an urban landscape image of a motorway on the outskirts of the city. It is my contribution to the collaboration – the staging of this image in a video installation context – that is relevant here. Installed across two separate screens, a transference of sorts occurs in 'Shenyang Fold'. The image folds from one screen to the other, presenting a brief window of time in which a total absence of image becomes the primary encounter for the viewer.

The concept of screen-based absence is a fertile area in the visual arts: such blank areas echo the sentiments of situationist cinema and its practitioners such as Guy Debord in 'Howlings in Favour of De Sade' (1952), as well as Jean Luc Godard's work, 'Hélas pour moi' (1993) in which intersections of blank space interrupt the narrative of the film. In reference to this technique, Ágnes Pethő states "while the blank disrupts the linearity of perception, there is also an auditive consciousness that behind the impenetrable screen

there is action going on” (Pethő, 2009: 174). It is this promotion of an awareness of a function behind the narrative device present in the moving image that was a particularly useful reference in the fabric of this research.

Certainly, presenting the digital image as a malleable entity, particularly in an identifiably materialistic sense, in the same way one might fold a piece of paper, speaks to the notion of the screen and the artifice previously explored in this chapter. What is of greater interest here, however, is the impression such absence leaves on the viewer, namely instilling a sense of loss, or anxiety.

When confronted with the blank screen in the work, viewers would typically respond with discomfort: to the contemporary screen viewer or user, absence implies technical malfunction. Perhaps in this way the absent screened image, results in a complete breakdown of the illusionary parameters of any screen viewing encounter, or perhaps of the regime itself. When the screened image presents the viewer with absence, the creeping anxiety of a viewing encounter centred on structure is almost too much to bear. Such an emptiness on screen evades kinship with that of the blank book or blank painting. Whereas these examples imply standing at the preface to image or content, the blank screen implies exactly the reverse – a loss, a subtraction or a void.



Fig. 70: Ben Fox and James Quinn 'Shenyang Fold' (2015), video stills

Anxiety in absence, mourning

As one might imagine, after struggling with the various aspects of landscape image as explored earlier in the chapter, and each area's respective successes and failures, embarking upon further practical research surrounding the theme of absence on screen was, at the time, very appealing.

The concept that the anxiety generated from a loss or an absence may in fact have reparatory or enlightening function began to steer the practical outcomes in the research at this juncture. Heidegger outlines as much in *Being and Time* – staking the claim that meaning and absolute authenticity occur in tandem with periods of anxiety. James Magrini outlines Heidegger's philosophy: "although a highly disturbing experience, anxiety holds the potential for enlightenment, as it opens Dasein to the fundamental characteristics of its temporal authenticity" (Magrini, 2006: 77).

Heidegger explores the notion of broken tools or equipment to illustrate this argument:

When a tool functions properly, its authentic 'readiness-to-hand' remains inconspicuous. On the contrary, when a tool ceases to function properly, or becomes unusable, it quickly draws the attention of the user to the system of relations of which it is a part as it is directed toward a specific task ... Dasein catches sight of everything connected to the work: the totality of the 'workshop' so to speak, is lit up (Magrini, 2006: 79).

The viewing screen that appears as somehow inoperative, or presents a visual absence,

instils an encroaching sense of anxiety in the viewer. This anxiousness catalyses “a state of confusion; meanings and interrelations are lost, and a slipping away of beings occurs ... Things that were once familiar and comprehensible show themselves in problematic ways” (ibid.).

This concept is the necessary route to resolving the concept of the problematic image in this research. As if to further cement this idea of an Heideggerian authenticity, Darian Leader’s concept of mourning bolsters this concept of image absence, ultimately paving the way for a creative reparation for the viewer. Leader discusses the concept of generating artworks as an act of reparations for absence or loss in *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia, and Depression* (2008). The crucial distinction made in this text is the fact that artworks have been made as a direct product of a position of grief, loss or absence. The subtext here is that absence therefore incentivises the griever to access and quantify their mourning – Leader coins this as a creating a “frame for absence” (Leader, 2008: 208).

As an example of this concept, Leader cites examples from Sophie Calle’s practice – notably ‘Disparitions’ and ‘Fantômes’ (2008) – as opportunities for creativity to exist as a form of reparation to loss. Here, the artist invited museum staff to draw or write about memories of absent artworks in their collection, this absence being a result of an inter-institutional loan or theft. This action was not an attempt to replace what was missing or lost, but instead to provoke a voluntary creative response that assimilated and responded to that very lack. In this light, my own practice shifted away from experiments with problematic imagery presented in previous works, and instead towards a scenario where viewers experience a post-absent anxious condition to greater or lesser degrees.

Modes of absence

Locating how this theme of absence might occur within my research first requires a few frames of reference. The concept of absence on screen and in the visual arts has been explored by other practitioners in many different ways. The degeneration of screened images to the point of absence such as David Hall's 'This is a Television Receiver' (1976) (Fig. 71) is one example of this matter. Here, the depicted figure – Richard Baker (a well-known newsreader at the time) – describes the confines of the television set within which he appears. The subsequent loops of this image result in the falling-away of various visual and sonic dimensions of the representation. The deconstruction of the essential illusionary values of screen viewership ultimately confronts the viewer with a reductive technological absence and sets the objecthood of the screen at centre stage.

David Batchelor's *Monochrome Archive* project (1997-2015) (Fig. 72), consisting of the reoccurring image of a blank white rectangle in a variety of urban landscapes, harkens to the concept of absence or the blank screen. The works featured throughout the project involve the artist's observations regarding the place of abstract art in the context of a contemporary city. Pitching the blank frame against the saturated urban landscape is a particularly poignant visual approach, one that is often subject to graffiti tagging or removal. Batchelor himself states "The city is a visually overloaded environment and the presence of a void within that visual fabric can seem like a kind of error, a mistake, something that shouldn't be there" (Waugh and Batchelor, 2015). Batchelor's argument that the blank form's presence in landscape imagery is somehow intolerable to the viewer and invites anxious correction must be noted.

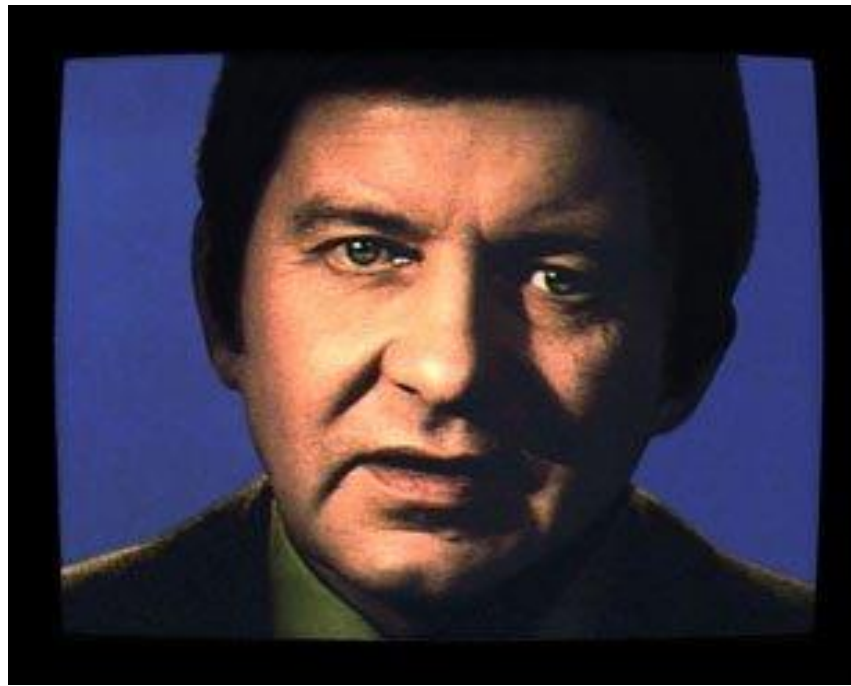


Fig. 71: David Hall, 'This is a Television Receiver' (1976), video stills

It is the absence presented in the works from Hiroshi Sugimoto's 'Theaters' (1978-present) (Fig. 73) series that is the pivotal example, however. The concept of absence in these works operates in tandem with themes of spatiality and temporality: setting the camera to a long exposure allows the artist to document the full duration of a motion picture in a single shot. What results in these images is a pair of specific formal parameters – those of the screen space, and those of the architectural space in which the audience is typically located. This emphasis on structure provokes contemplation as to the nature of screen viewership in public spaces over time.

It should be noted that in Sugimoto's series of works, the screen is depicted as shining, having captured a moving image over a long-exposure. Here, the stretched temporal dimension depicted in the work does not display an empty screen or a screen bereft of content but rather a screen that is full of image. Arden Reed states that "Sugimoto performs a double paradox: multiplying images produces uniformity, and compacting motion creates stasis. The same gesture destroys and preserves. Each of the 'Theaters' conceals countless frames in the act of recording them" (Reed, 2017: 175). Sugimoto's work correlates with one of my own research outcomes mentioned in the previous chapter, 'Gamma' (2016). Both artworks display what might be interpreted as an empty screen, from which content is absent. The outcome is the antithesis of this notion, however: the screened image is present in both works, but the question of accessing this image runs concurrent to these works.



Fig. 72: David Batchelor, 'No.19 Islington' (1999) as part of 'Monochrome Archive' (1997–2015), photograph



Fig. 73: Hiroshi Sugimoto, 'Tri City Drive-in' (1993), photograph

In 'Gamma' readjustments of the angle at which the screen faces the viewer results in access to the representation present in the work. In Sugimoto's 'Theatres', temporality replaces this oblique mobility. There are differences in these works, of course, in the sense that while 'Gamma' has the potential to reveal its representation to the viewer, Sugimoto's photography prevents such access, and instead an implied presence occurs.

Sugimoto's work presents a collision of image absence, space and temporality that balances and provokes a response to each area in equal measure. In his work, the spatial and technical aspects comprising the work appear just as boldly as the (non-)image itself. The anxiety provoked by the absence on the screen, and the subsequent mourning, are offset with a pointed turn towards its surroundings and environment.

What appears to be the consolidating factor in Sugimoto's 'Theatres' series is the stretching of the temporal aspects of artworks in order to destabilise the habitual immediacy with which the viewer engages image. What occurred to me at this stage of the project is that my practical outcomes also similarly distort temporality, most commonly by means of the cyclical loop. Each of the works presented in this thesis are displayed in perpetuity – they do not have discernible beginnings or ends. If my own practice can utilise temporal aspects to instil an anxiety in the viewer, particularly those that include aspects of absence, then they could very well be of particular use in moving toward a resolution with my ongoing issue of problematic imagery.

Temporality, simultaneity, meniscus

Temporality has been an area of interest for this research since the outset: returning to

Daniel Crooks and his work 'Phantom Ride' (2016) (Fig. 74) exemplifies this. The work features overlaying imagery interlocked into cohabitation along a singular trajectory. In this fashion, the spatial and temporal components characteristic of Crooks' work are typically present; it is however the staging of the installation that sets *Phantom Ride* apart from the previously discussed works in the artist's body of work.

The work's primary component is a two-way projection screen, with each side of the work's screen presenting a different image simultaneously – one side depicting a forward trajectory, the other the sequence of events that have already passed. To Crooks this staging allows the screen to become a threshold between the past and the future; the screen becomes a "meniscus" (Crooks, 2016) in this sense, or the site through which time passes.

The staging here is reminiscent of Steve McQueen's 'Ashes' (2014-15) (Fig. 75), similarly presenting a simultaneous display of two projected images. One side of the screen presents the work's eponymous character, vivid in its portrayal of his carefree nature set against an idyllic landscape backdrop. The other side of the screen presents the sudden, unexpected outcome for the work's central figure. This simultaneity of the easy, limitless affability of the preceding image and its abrupt end in its partner image presents a confrontational dichotomy. A linkage between the two images occurs in a shared soundtrack, though like Crooks' work, the screen again acts as a meniscus – the point at which time travels through. The simultaneity afforded by the screen meniscus in McQueen's work differs from the spatio-temporal themes in Crooks' 'Phantom Ride', instead bridging the gap between its titular figure's presence and earthly essence towards his death, memory and absence.

These works both appear to occupy a similar space as Peter Campus' video work, particularly his piece, 'Three Transitions' (1973) (Fig. 76). The temporal meniscus is apparent within the screened image, as opposed to an active structural component of the video installation. The work consists of three iterations of a 'transition', with the depicted images – a self-portrait of the artist – displacing and superimposing themselves onto one another, always sharing the same spatial plane. This allows Campus to interrogate the notion that the perception of the screened image demarcates absolute reality.

What does this notion of the temporal meniscus offer this practice-led research, and to the notion of the problematic image? This question is best answered with an example of my outcomes, entitled 'Fog' (2016) (Figs. 77 and 78). Here, two versions of the same image are staged in dramatically contrasting fashions to present and further push the notion of the screen meniscus, to display simultaneity, or to conjoin apparently disparate display formats. This takes place firstly in the staging of the work, with one version mounted on a wall, whereas the other is a free-standing object; secondly, in the contrasting scale of the work – one a large 32 inch HD television, the other a small 7 inch hand-held tablet; thirdly, in the orientation of the work – portrait and landscape; and lastly, in that the displayed images are both monochrome, with one displaying an inverted colour palette, implying a reciprocity.

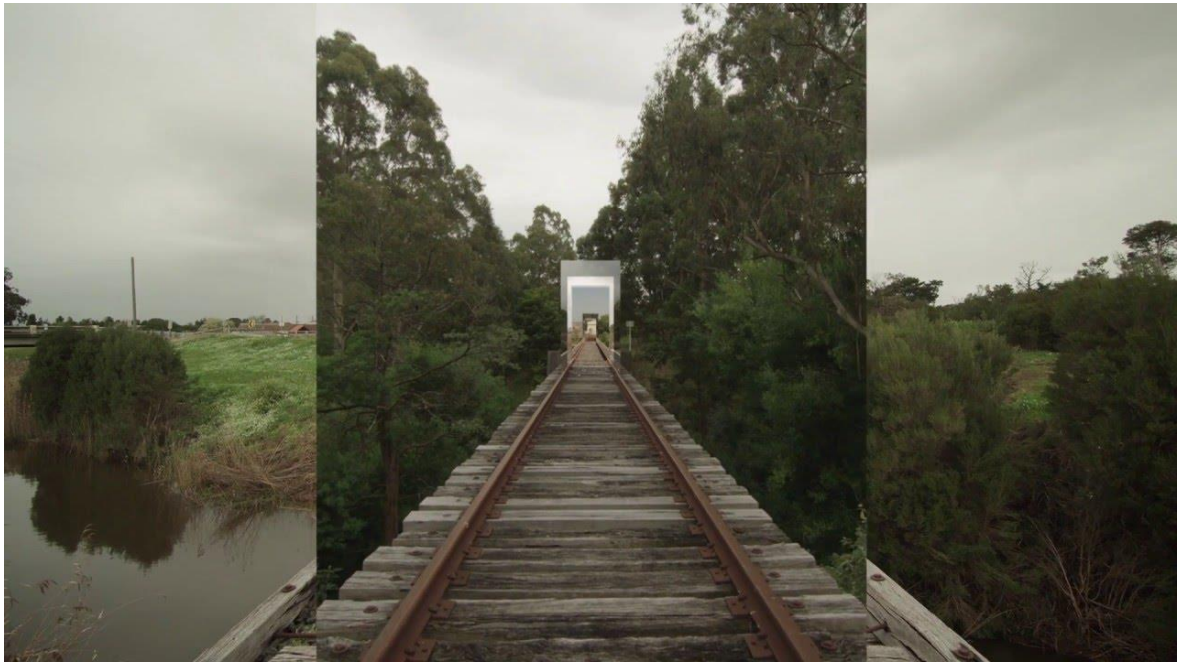


Fig. 74: Daniel Crooks, 'Phantom Ride' (2016), two channel video installation



Fig. 75: Steve McQueen, 'Ashes' (2014-15), installation view, photo c: Roberto Marosi



Fig. 76: Peter Campus, 'Three Transitions' (1973), video still



Fig. 77: James Quinn, 'Fog' (2016), video still



Fig. 78: James Quinn, 'Fog' (2016), video installation

These various aspects of the work push the notion of the temporal meniscus to an extreme. By incentivising a physical movement through the meniscal space between these two screens, the viewer becomes temporally dislocated. Certainly, time echoes and passes much as in McQueen's or Crooks' works, though instead of the screen meniscus symbolising a passage or sequence of time, events on screen unwind in a perpetual autonomy. Situating the viewer in this space as a temporal overseer, focus turns instead to the drastically contrasting staging or structural qualities comprising these two separate images. The artifice of the screen, and the subjectivity involved with engaging with its staging, appears ever clearer. Here begins an unwinding of the notion that visual distortions may be the only route to exposing the artificiality of the screened image, and as such, must be explored further.

The persistent image

Having outlined the various practical experiments and attempts to reconcile the problematic screen image with the critical reappraisal of the screen structure, this project must look towards a solution, or at least, adopt an appropriate, suitable image that best serves the interests of this practice-led research. Moving away from direct engagements with the traditional connotations and narrative traps of landscape imagery, instead focusing on incorporating themes of temporality, and absence, a common quality has arisen within more recent works – a move towards imagery with more minimalist sensibilities.

It is therefore the work 'Birds' (2016) (Figs. 79 and 80) that I propose as a foil to the problematic image as presented in this chapter. Unpicking this work sees it aligning with various themes covered throughout the chapter, as well as generating new points for consideration. 'Birds' features core compositional values of foreground and background within landscape manipulated to the point of erasure, thereby highlighting subjects operating within this now reduced landscape. Such a visual arrangement is reminiscent of the surrealist concept of *dépaysement*, wherein dislocated aspects of image and their subsequent translation into another visual context provoke a heightened sense of displacement or disorientation within the viewer, thereby providing a platform for generating new knowledge or understanding (O'Rourke and Hauptman, 2014: 3).

'Birds' therefore situates itself in the context of such sentiments, particularly as the image presented within the work operates as a vignette of sorts. The highlighted figures in the work, the birds of the work's title, appear clipped from another context entirely, floating in (or perhaps on) a landscape with no points of linear perspectival reference. It is, however, the temporal dimension of the work that outlines it as a counterpart to this chapter's problematic image. An initial viewer engagement aligns with the work's subjects, though the repetitive trajectory of the subjects begins to unravel such engagement. The persistence of this temporal loop seeks to detract from any purposeful narrative, instead offering a tacit redundancy and ultimately, artificiality. As stated previously, every work generated for this research is displayed on a cyclical loop – presenting the temporal aspect of the work in such a way distances the practice from conventional modes of viewership, as well as presenting a series of provocative idiosyncrasies.

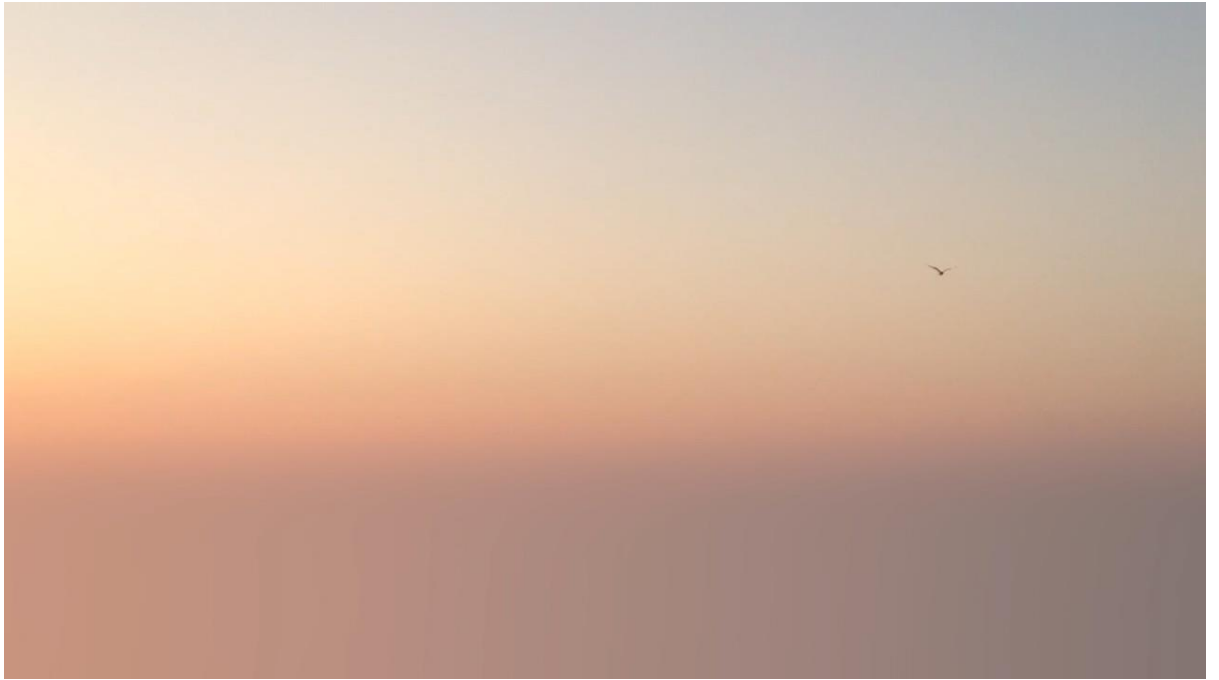


Fig. 79: James Quinn, 'Birds' (2016), video still



Fig. 80: James Quinn, 'Birds' (2016), video installation

Consider the previously discussed work 'Sky Waterfall': here, the short temporal loop present within the work features a sharp and sudden repetition that maintains the piece's perpetuity. 'Birds' is similarly presented in temporal perpetuity, albeit without the sudden sharp contrast between loops present in 'Sky Waterfall'. For the briefest moment, the figures disappear, presenting an absence to the viewer, only to re-emerge and repeat their trajectory infinitely. Here the temporal aspect of the work endlessly persists as an element that is independent of the viewer's engagement.

Laura Mulvey's text *Death 24x a Second* offers some clarity on this. Mulvey suggests that delays or alterations to the temporal aspects of film offer a chance for viewers to shift their "consciousness between temporalities" (Mulvey, 2006: 184), namely, that diegetic temporality which is dictated within the narrative of the film, and the temporality concurrent "beyond the constraints of the film frame to the society from which it is derived." (Ibid.). Furthermore, Mulvey contests that "the process of delaying a film inevitably highlights its aesthetics and the illusion of movement, and the hidden presence of the filmstrip on which the illusion depends" (Mulvey, 2006: 185). This anti-illusionary ability to stretch temporal aspects of the work is doubled down upon as Mulvey cites Raymond Bellour, claiming that disrupted temporality generates a "pensive spectator" (Mulvey, 2006: 186), a viewership that steers towards engagements with the nature of cinema itself.

Mulvey's assertion of a pensive spectator supports the fact that the cyclical temporality offered in 'Birds' ultimately steers viewers towards engaging with aspects of the screen other than its representation. In this way, whereas in previous works saturated visual distortions attempted to draw attention to the artificiality of the work (thereby inviting

psychic projection or implied narrative), here it is the temporal perpetuity presented in 'Birds' that outlines the notion of the screen-as-artifice to the viewer.

The scale of the work is also key – as indicated in the installation image (Fig. 80).

Presenting the work on a 7-inch tablet screen, carrying with it an associated connotation of interactivity, underlines the automatism apparent in the work: the temporal succession cannot be altered, it operates in a vacuum, outside of the viewer's temporal sphere. Such a temporal dichotomy between the viewer and the work emphasises the idea that the two operate entirely apart from one another. Though the work may appear 'full' of image, as with Sugimoto's screens, the absolute and authoritative parameter of the work is its temporal quality. Such dogged perpetuity situates the viewer in temporal and perceptual doldrums – a form of image-as-absence occurs: the image operates in absolute autonomy. In light of this, feedback regarding 'Birds' has outlined that the work is particularly melancholic. Exploring the relationship between the melancholy at work in 'Birds' and the previously outlined notion of mourning regarding the absent screened image is key here. Referring once more to *The New Black, Mourning, Melancholia, and Depression*, Leader outlines the key difference between mourning and melancholy:

Mourning involves the process of establishing the denial of a positive term, a recognition of absence and loss. We accept that a presence is no longer there.

Melancholia, on the other hand, involves the affirmation of a negative term. The lost loved one becomes a hole, an ever-present void which the melancholic cannot give up his attachment to (Leader, 2008: 199).

These two aspects of the positive and negative terms of melancholy and mourning appear

to be at work within 'Birds'. The temporal perpetuity present in the work generates a melancholic response within the work, in the sense that the typical encounter with the viewing screen's image is replaced by an encounter emphasising the image's autonomous, oblique temporality. This generates a melancholic site within which the loss of an authentic image occurs to the viewer. A critical relationship forms in this melancholic moment for the viewer, however the screen itself is not absent. In this way, the viewing screen structure itself becomes Leader's proposed "frame for absence", the route to a reparatory critical engagement with the remaining formal aspect of the work. Leader's text therefore provides an orientation around which my practice can operate around. If the viewer phases from melancholic encounter to a mourning for the absent image, attention must steer to the remaining, steadfast article in that viewing encounter: screen structure.

I call this phenomenon present in 'Birds' the persistent image. The persistent image is at once present, and yet exists independent from the temporal sphere of the viewer, in absolute autonomy, provoking a sequence of reactions from its viewer. The persistent image offers at once an access point via the screen's image, a skepticism as to the authenticity of this image as it loops in perpetuity, a melancholic engagement that comes with the realisation of the image's artificiality, and a summative reparatory mourning of this absence of an authentic image, steering the entire encounter towards an engagement with the structural aspect of the work.

Summary

To summarise, this chapter has attempted to discuss in detail the problematic aspects of

the imagery chosen throughout the research project, as well as the various strands of theory that influenced or steered them. The chapter's research outcomes discussed here have attempted to develop a pure conceptual mode with which to separate the viewer from a tacit, habitual screen-based image engagement, towards favouring a structure-centred appraisal of the screen. Whilst this chapter has largely outlined a series of practical experiments that have attempted to achieve this aim, what instead occurs is a qualitative appraisal of the suitability of the imagery employed in this research.

Accepting that such a separation of viewers from the viewed screen image is, indeed, largely problematic, this research proposes an image that accentuates and establishes the screen's structure through a persistent temporality. As such, the outcome this research presents is entitled 'the persistent image'. The persistent image bypasses the problematic areas of the typical screen-based image, and indeed previous research outcomes, by emphasising the temporal dimension of the work as opposed to aspects of conceptually loaded images such as landscape. The persistent image resists the tacit assumption that screen-based representation unilaterally offers viewers an opportunity to engage subjectively with that which is displayed. The persistent image presents a temporality that operates in absolute autonomy independent to the interaction or engagement of the viewer. This state of indeterminacy that the persistent image instils within the viewer results in a melancholy of sorts, a screen filled with image, yet clearly displaying its cyclical illusionary inauthenticity. By establishing an absence of an authentic image in the work, the screen itself becomes the 'frame for absence' within which the viewer can embark upon a reparative mourning of the image, centralizing the screen's structure as the primary facet through which viewers encounter the work.

Chapter 5: The Phenomenological Screen

Range

The last chapter of this thesis takes the opportunity to explore an area that became increasingly apparent throughout the practical experimentation that led this research enquiry – the phenomenological aspects of my artworks, and indeed, the topic of screen phenomenology. Locating precisely the breadth of this notion of screen phenomenology in the context of this research requires some critical location. Lucas D. Introna's and Fernando M. Ilharco's text *The Screen and the World: A Phenomenological Investigation into Screens and Our Engagement in the World* offers an aim and range close to my own research, as well as outlining an area to further expand upon.

The text references Heidegger's analysis of the term 'phenomenology' as presented in *Being and Time* – "To let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger, 1962: 58) – in order to provide a basis for Introna's and Ilharco's study. This examination of Heideggerian 'thinghood' (Heidegger, 1962: 59) that is so paramount to his phenomenological approach and philosophy takes centre stage in *The Screen and the World*.

The essential "screen-ness of the screen" (Introna and Ilharco, 2004: 297), its phenomenological attributes, both visible and invisible, as well as their implications for viewer-screen interrelation are all interrogated here. The authors offer this key statement on their notion – "The essence of screen is being constituted in gathering attention by the presentation of relevance (and the concealment of irrelevance) in order to mediate our

being in the world” (Introna and Ilharco, 2004: 311). What begins to establish itself throughout the body of this text is a clear dichotomy between relevance (image presented on screens) and irrelevance (the invisible screen format that delivers content). This dichotomy presents a phenomenological dilemma, in that, as a primary characteristic of the screen’s ‘screen-ness’, the screen structure conceals itself from a typical viewing encounter.

Introna and Ilharco acknowledge that such a concealment or invisibility must have a rationale or effect on the phenomenological appraisal of the viewing screen: “Why does the screen in its essence not show invisibility, this hidden-ness, implicit in the presence of a screen? ... Why does the screen make itself invisible, that is, not relevant? Why in the essence of screen does this invisibility not show itself?” (Introna and Ilharco, 2004: 312).

The rationale outlined with regards to this purported invisibility of the viewing screen is that in fact, this invisibility is “essential to screen qua screen” (ibid.) – that as the screen only makes representation visible via a simultaneous complicit invisibility of screen structure, this invisibility is a crucial quality of its inherent ‘screen-ness’, or in the writers’ own words, “This is to say, that screen, in its essence has concealment: they conceal that which is excluded and, more essentially, they conceal what they are for us, as screen” (ibid.). The position outlined in *The Screen and the World* therefore surmises that a phenomenological study of screen viewership “discloses a notion of an already there implicit agreement” (Introna and Ilharco, 2004: 311).

This 'already there implicit agreement' between the viewer and the screen is that the interaction at the centre of any viewer screen engagement "attracts us, makes us look at the screen in its screen-ness, and simultaneously condemns to forgetfulness that which was agreed upon" and that "the bargaining, the transacting, the negotiating, that typically precede an agreeing are pre-emptively excluded" (Introna and Ilharco, 2004: 313). Such a statement steers towards a dynamic of absolute autonomy between the viewer and the screen – a sense that the viewer is neither party nor parley to the projected representation within the screen as it perpetuates, this viewing dynamic generated from a position of structural concealment.

So, how does this notion of the screen as promoting an 'already there implicit agreement' factor into my research and its practical outcomes? Certainly, one could make the argument that this practice-led research has sought to upend this sense of the 'already agreed-upon' between the screen and its viewer, and provoke a destabilisation of this autonomous habitual encounter with the viewing screen, as explored in each previous chapter of this thesis.

It is however by delving into this aspect of the 'already there' that I uncovered an aspect of the work that had previously eluded me. Introna and Ilharco's literature refocused my reflective criticality on practical by-products and the marginal phenomenological aspects of the works that had previously gone unaddressed, or perhaps more importantly, unnoticed.

Already there implicit agreement

During the installation and feedback regarding my 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018) at Norwich University of the Arts, attention had been drawn to an unforeseen aspect of the works when staged in this environment. With reference to my works 'Nimbus I-III' (2018) and 'Fog' (2018), these exemplify the notion of a projected light, or aura-like presences generated by the viewing screen – the light cast from the screen's aperture pools beneath or around these works. The specific area of the works in question has been highlighted with white rectangles in Figs. 81 – 83.

'Nimbus I-III' (2018), with its three orientations of installed screens, generated a projected light generated from the aperture located on each screen's enclosure. In the two screens that occupy a horizontal and vertical orientation, the light pools onto the wall the screen is affixed to. The final, front-facing screen projects the screened light outward from the aperture as with any typical frontal screen encounter. The pooled light here also retains subtle characteristics of the representation located within the screen in the shape of flickers, a soft suggested movement, and a sense that the aspects repeat in a perpetual cycle. 'Fog' (2018) similarly captures this sense of the presence of the screen's projected aura: as with 'Nimbus I-III', the motion and sequencing present within the screened image on the larger freestanding screen are captured in front of the work on the floor. The pooled light here is particularly vivid, owing largely to the scale of the screen, and its more saturated display of motion-in-landscape.



Fig. 81: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' light detail (horizontal) (2018), video installation

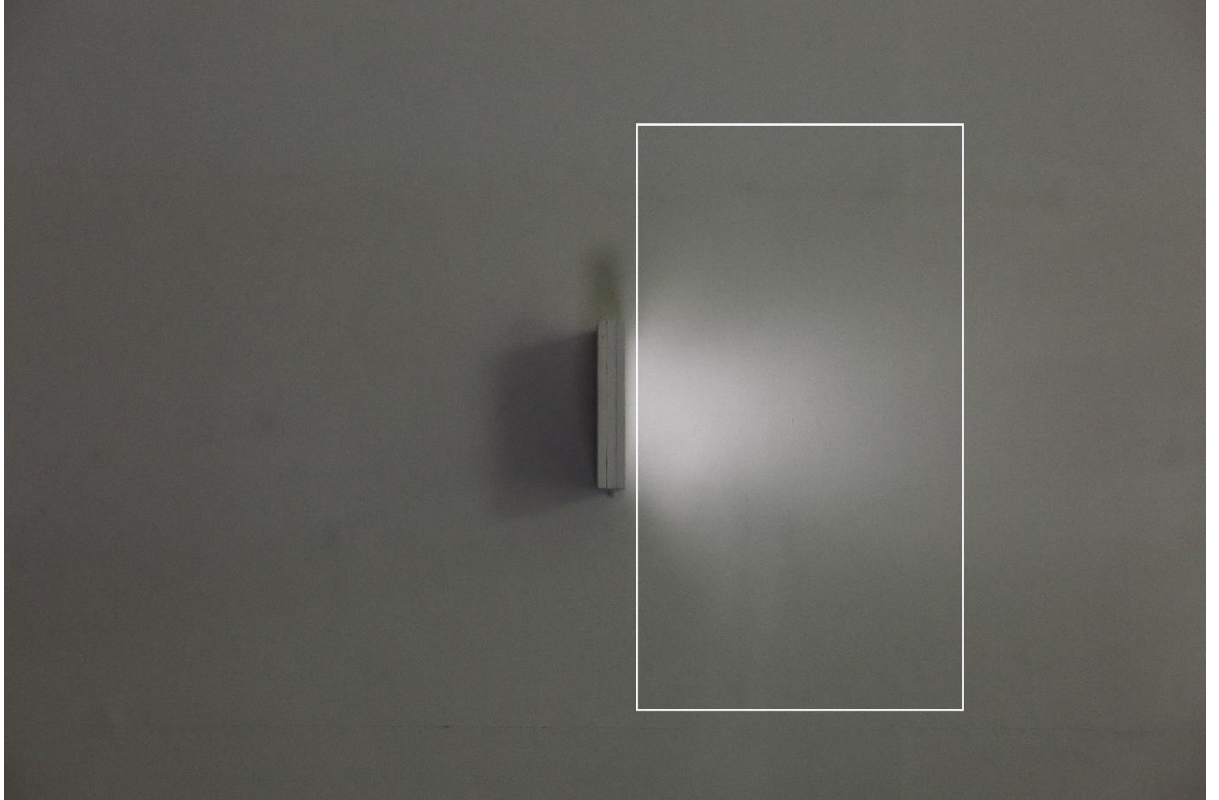


Fig. 82: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' light detail (vertical) (2018), video installation

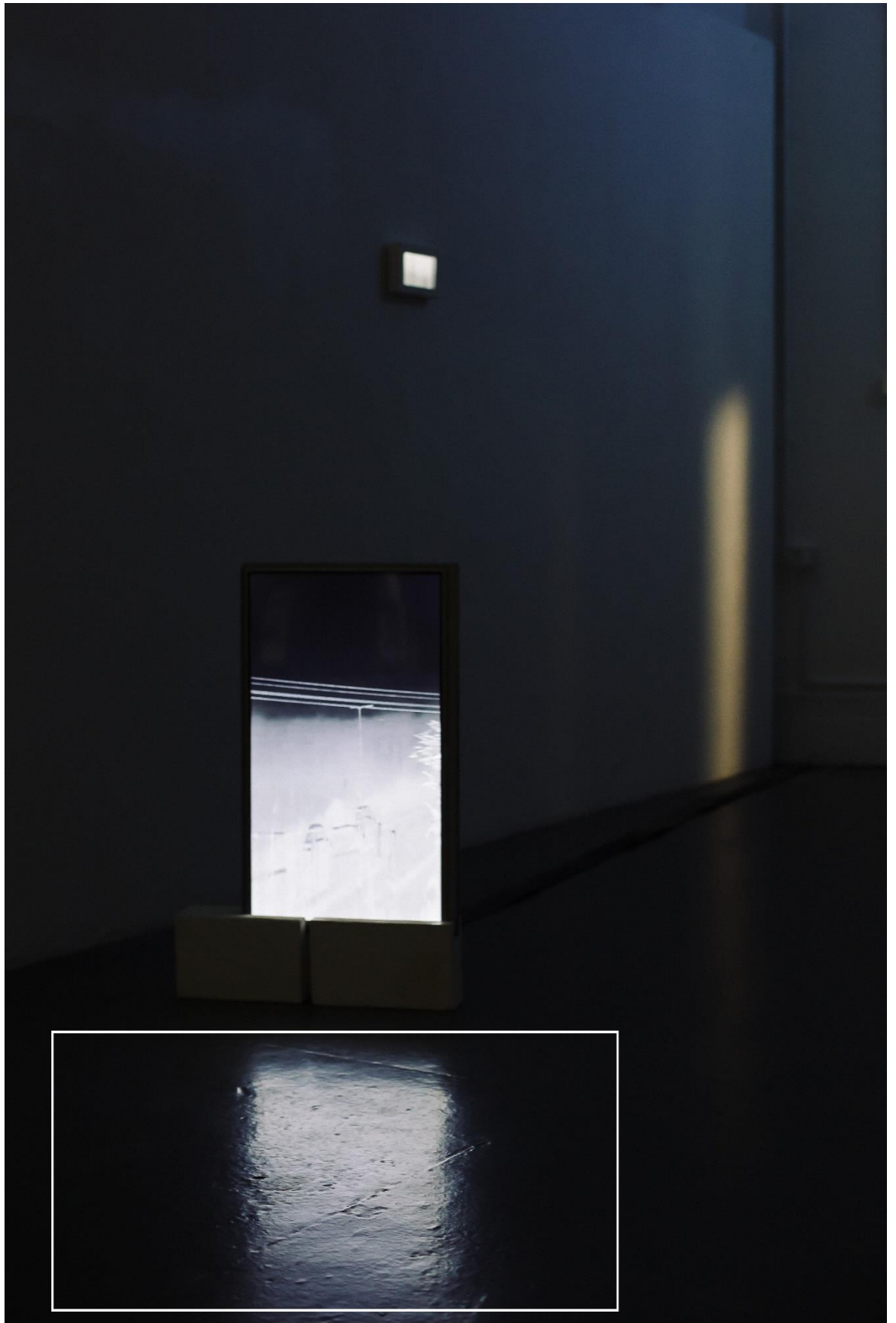


Fig. 83: James Quinn, 'Fog' light detail (2018) video installation

This concept's implications are perhaps more far reaching than is initially evident. What of the space between the screen aperture and the viewer in a habitual frontal screen encounter? Is this space equally 'full' of the screen's projected light and just lacking an appropriate surface to capture and render the screen's projected light visible? This research proposes that as the screen's projected light exists concurrent to all viewing screen interactions, it must be considered as supplementary to Introna's and Ilharco's 'already-there implicit agreement' between the viewer and the viewing screen.

It is an approach to the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty that allows us to further grasp this abstract space – in *Phenomenology of Perception* he writes: "Our visual field is not neatly cut out of our objective world and is not a fragment with sharp edges like the landscape framed by the window" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 323). Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology denotes an experiential sphere that surpasses the constraints of the ocular: 'We see as far as our hold on things extends, far beyond the zone of clear vision, behind us. When we reach the limits of the visual field, we do not pass from vision to non-vision: the gramophone playing in the next room, and not expressly seen by me, still counts in my visual field' (Ibid.).

Certainly, the implication Merleau-Ponty makes with this statement is that visual perception is not strictly limited by the ocular field; instead, his phenomenological approach includes periphery experiential aspects not limited by the sense of sight, thereby establishing a tension point between experiencing the visible and the invisible. Furthermore, in another of his works, *L'œil et l'esprit*, Merleau-Ponty further explores this concept in relation to visual arts practice, namely the role of the painter. Here, he argues that the painter's world is "nothing but visible: a world almost mad, because it is

complete while it is yet only partial” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 166).

Kwok-Ying-Lau elaborates on this notion regarding Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy that the painter’s vision is one of madness, stating that “The Painter’s vision is a vision of madness, because it aims at the total possession of Being, including that which is visible and that which is invisible” (Lau, 2013: 175). To Merleau-Ponty, the painter’s vision-turned-capture of his or her subject is in fact, to some degree, “a magical theory of vision” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 166) that can render the invisible visible to an otherwise “profane eye” or an eye which “waits for others to teach her to see” (Lau, 2013: 176).

Whilst I do not subscribe to the notion that the viewers of my works share Merleau-Ponty’s and Lau’s concept of a profane eye that must be reformed by pedagogic induction or an enlightenment that allows them see that which was previously invisible, there is an element of the staging of my artworks works such as ‘Nimbus I-III’ and ‘Fog’ that somehow renders visible the typically invisible aspect of the screen’s projected light.

Aura

Further exploring this invisible-turned-visible projected light present in the works involved defining the precise terminology used to describe it. Initially, this research referred to the screen’s projected light as an ‘aura’, though in doing so invited certain interpretations. One such interpretation is the shared terminology with Walter Benjamin’s ‘Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction’. Benjamin’s proposal for ‘aura’, with its linkage between the concept of the authenticity of an original artwork, and its eventual diminishment or absence when extrapolated into the practice of reproduction has a

certain degree of usefulness here. Benjamin notes, “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (Benjamin, 1969: 214 -18). The concept of an ‘aura’ of an artwork therefore resides in its unique cultural contextual position.

Benjamin’s notion of ‘aura’ differs from the one engaged in my own practice, which produces an ocular aura, a literal aspect emanating from the work, as opposed to Benjamin’s aura as philosophical model, with its associated entropic connotations.

Benjamin’s notion of the diminishment of aura does, however, prompt consideration in relation to the screen’s visual ‘aura’. Even referring to the projected light in my works as an ‘aura’ subsequently stifles and problematises this line of enquiry. In this way, referring to the emitted light as the screen’s ‘aura’ is problematic, charged as the term is with already established connotations.

Projector

Further complications arise when referring to the screen-as-projector of light, first of which being the distinction between the screen’s projection quality and that of earlier technologies of projection. Alexandro Ladaga and Silvia Mateiga’s text *Moving Layers Contextual Video in Art and Architecture* provides the necessary distinction between these modes of projection, proposing that in “monitors the electronic image is emitted and transmitted from within, whereas in video projections the image is emitted onto a surface that is specific for projection and reflection, qualities that enable its meta-video-morphosis of architectonic space, the decontextualization and disorientation of the spectator” (Mateiga and Ladaga, 2014: 38).

The assertion here is that the ‘monitor’ or screen contains its own image, while the traditional projector casts its image onto a specific surface. This notion is further compounded with regards to Vivian Sobchack’s assertion that “Images on television screens and computer terminals seem neither projected nor deep. Phenomenologically they seem, rather, somehow ‘just there’ as we (inter)face them” (Sobchack, 1994: 24). My research instead argues that the representation occurring within a screen is not ‘projected’ in the traditional sense as outlined in *Moving Layers*, and that Sobchack’s claim is certainly valid, but these two resources are outlining the phenomenon of screen-based image, not the phenomenon of its projected light. I would therefore maintain that the screen does indeed cast or project a light from its aperture, something made abundantly clear when staged in the specific lighting conditions of this research’s practical experiments. Describing this phenomenon as ‘screen-as-projector’ will only serve to further complicate the concept.

Diffuser

Dan Flavin’s artworks, with their fluorescent tubes, and accompanying projected light are a useful point of reference at this juncture (Fig. 86). Donald Judd’s appraisal of Flavin’s work presented in *Dan Flavin: The Complete Lights, 1961 - 1996* examines the light produced by his works, denoting that the “three main aspects of Flavin’s work are the florescent tubes as the source of light, the light diffused throughout the surrounding space, or cast upon nearby surfaces, and the arrangement together or placement upon surfaces of the fixtures and tubes ... They are very much a particular visible state, a phenomenon” (Judd, 1969). Judd’s description of the source, diffusion and placement of light in Flavin’s works initially appeared to have certain similarities with the projected

screen light in my own practice. However, Gernot Böhme's text *Light and Space. On the Phenomenology of Light* builds upon the notion of the screen's diffused light. Böhme notes that viewers "can by no means limit themselves to colour but must also take account of all the remaining light phenomena like glowing, brilliance, flickering, shadow, and much more" (Böhme, 2014: 7). These phenomenological aspects of light are present in my own outcomes, but with one crucial addition: the emitted light in these works possesses qualities of the representation presented within the installed screen. This emitted light is not a clear mirroring of the representation's source; instead, it creates an abstracted space, charged with the screened image. In this way, aspects of the origin of the image make themselves clear to the viewer, for instance, flickers of imagery projected onto the wall in 'Nimbus I-III' or abstract motion presented in 'Fog' pooling underneath the free-standing sculpture. In this way, the light projected from my works, with its abstraction of the representation presented in the screen, is an essential phenomenological quality of the work.

This is an important aspect to consider, particularly in reference to the works located on the second floor in my 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (Figs. 85 and 86). These works employ an LED light strip to simulate the projected light on the screens located on the first floor of the exhibition. One crucial distinction now presents itself, however: these LEDs do not contain aspects of the screen's representation like the projected light from the screen. In this way, the works in Figs. 85 and 86 seem to project a hollow version of the light from their counterparts downstairs. In this sense, the screen does not project its light in the traditional sense, or diffuse light as per Flavin's work, but instead, emits a light that is charged with aspects of its image. Given this notion, it might be appropriate to describe this phenomenon as the screen operating as an 'emitter'.

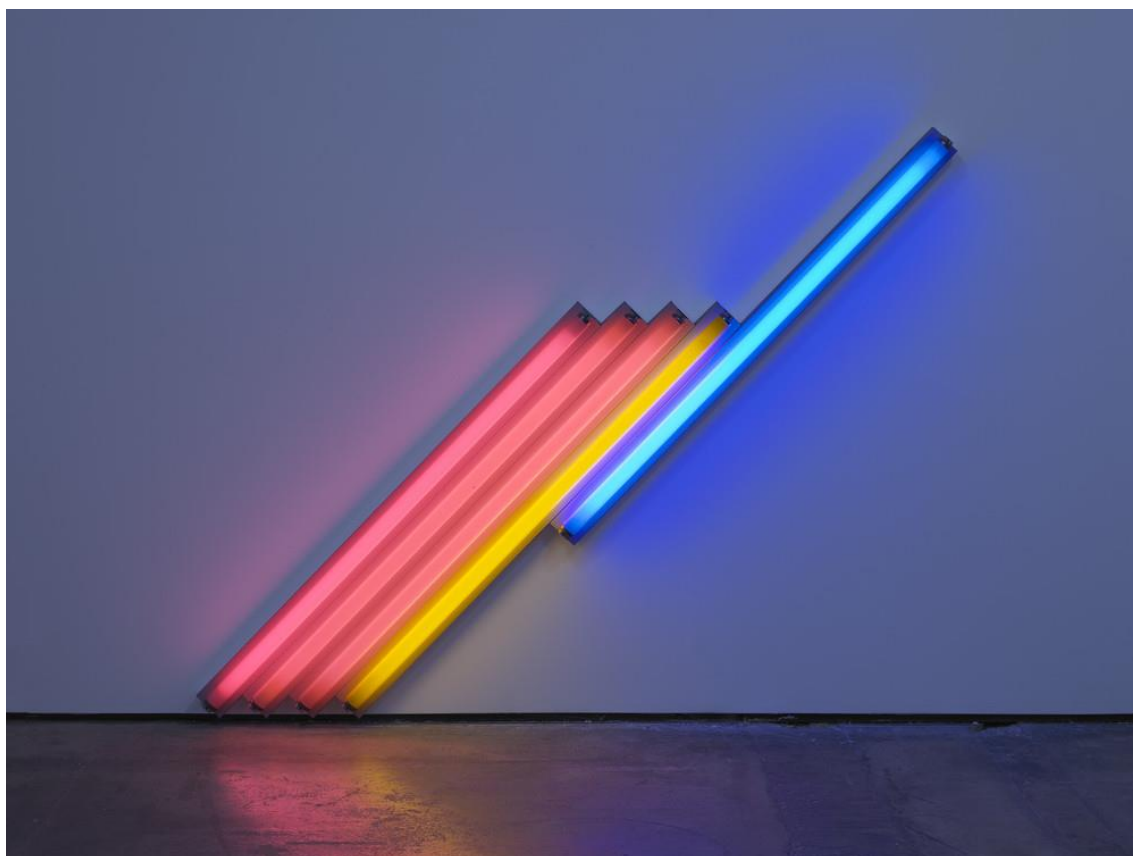


Fig. 84: Dan Flavin, 'Untitled (for Frederika and Ian) 3' (1987), pink, yellow, and blue fluorescent light, 183 cm long on the diagonal

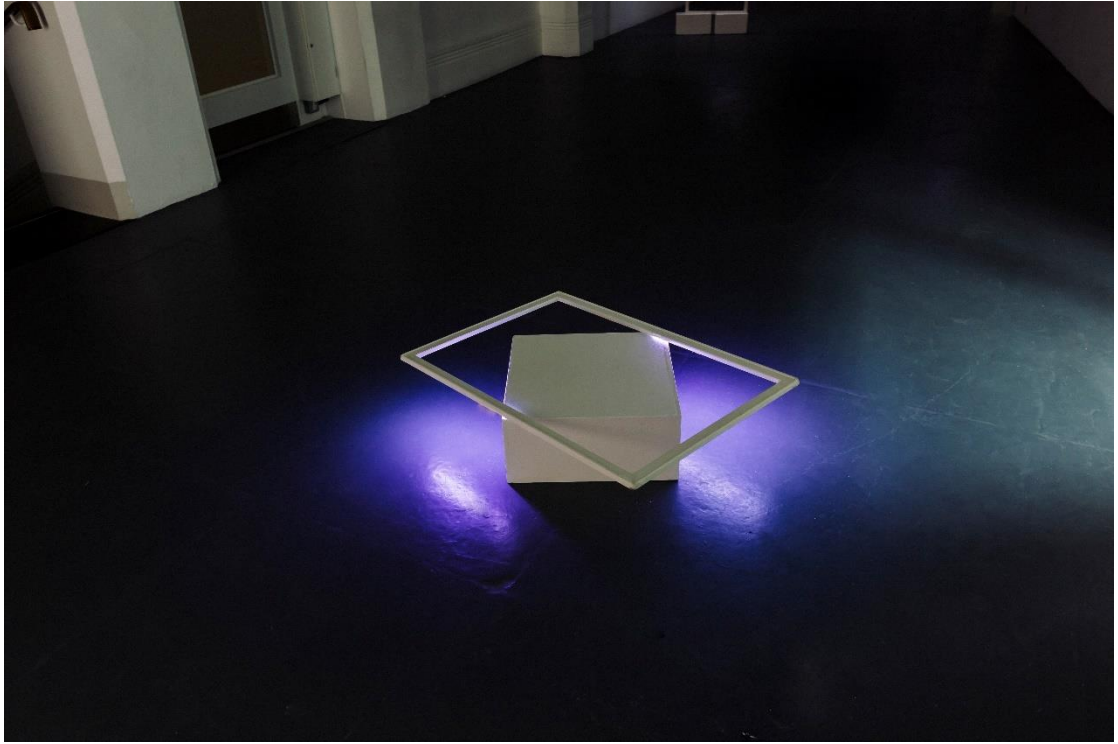


Fig. 85: James Quinn, 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018), floor 2 installation detail

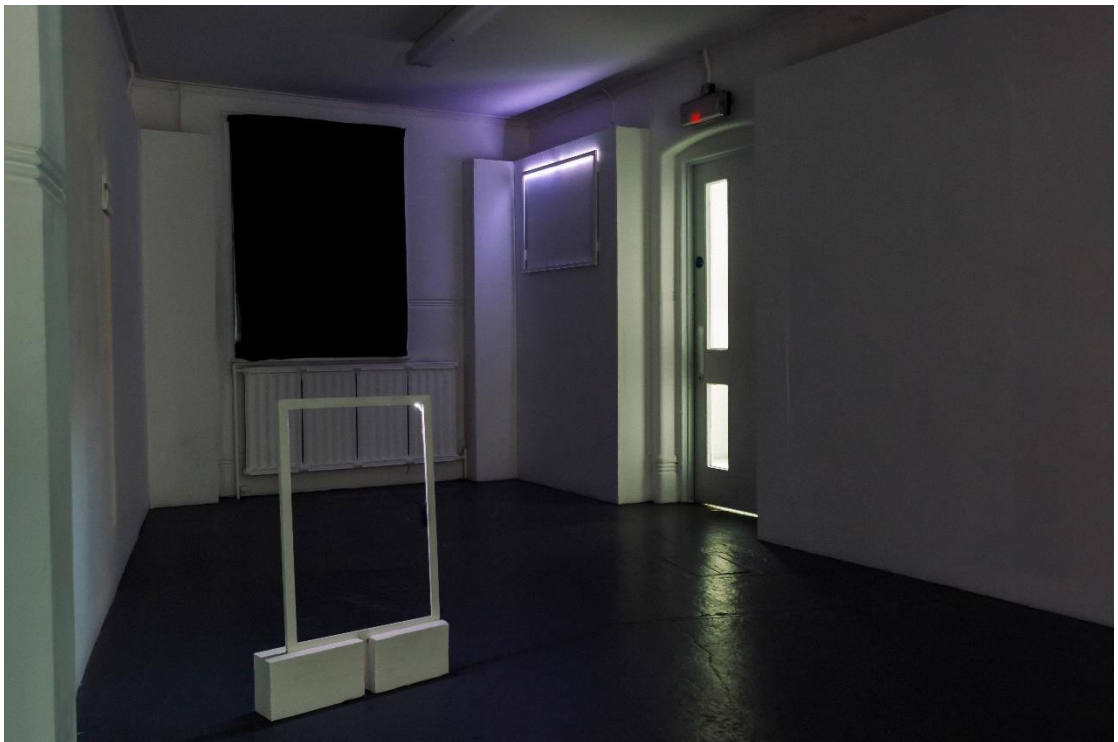


Fig. 86: James Quinn, 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018), floor 2 installation detail 2

Screen as emitter

So perhaps, just this thesis has outlined the other aspects of this research project, from the objecthood of the screen engendering an emancipatory obliquity, to the ongoing issues of problematic imagery and a reparatory persistent image, another aspect of the work has covertly run alongside each of these areas: the screen operating as an emitter. Resolving on labelling the screen as an emitter raises fresh areas of concern. As previously noted, there is the fact that the screen surface emits its cast light that is charged with its content, image, or representation. Aspects of the question of this emitted light resound with concepts explored in contemporary art practices that explore and utilise the medium of light. Exploring these references allow for further refinement of the nature of this emitted screen light.

Light has often found itself as a topic for scrutiny in the visual arts. Exploring its technical limitations and its immaterial nature, amongst other facets, viewers are asked to position themselves objectively and critically towards light in numerous artistic practices. James Turrell's light artworks are a useful point of reference with regards to this. Turrell states that although "light exhibits wave phenomena, nevertheless it is a thing — it is optical material. But we don't treat it as such. Instead we use it very casually to illuminate other things. I'm interested in the revelation of light itself and that it has thingness" (Turrell, 2002). Such an approach towards light consistently pervades Turrell's practical efforts. Works such as 'Breathing Light' (2013) (Fig. 87) locate the viewer inside a light-saturated environment, with the light perpetually shifting between different shades and tones of colour. The result is a complete immersion, a placing of the audience within the light, as if to emphasize this supposed materiality and 'thingness' of light. Other works such as 'Raemar Pink White' (1969) (Fig. 88) again attempting to establish a sense of the material

thingness of the light; a meeting point for the viewer's material being and the previously immaterial substance of light, which for his work is often described as touchable, or inviting some form of physical interaction.

Such qualities in Turrell's work can present problematic areas, however. Gordon Hughes writes that such a saturated, total presence of light in the perceptual and spatial parameters of the viewer "simply dictates a response. And this response is not something we understand or don't understand. It is a reaction in the body that produces a set of fairly predictable physiological and cognitive effects in each and every subject" (Hughes, 2016). The result for Hughes is that the viewer takes no part in a subjective reaction to the staging of the work. Hughes continues by noting that Turrell "neither compels nor does not compel our conviction. For in 'compelling our conviction' – or not – an artwork allows us the freedom *not* to respond to it; a freedom we all but are deprived of in Turrell's work" (ibid.).



Fig. 87: James Turrell, 'Breathing Light' (2013), LED light into space, dimensions variable,
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, photo: Florian Holzherr



Fig. 88: James Turrell, 'Raemar Pink White' (1969), Collection of Art and Research, Las
Vegas, photo: Florian Holzherr

In this way, the arrangement of light presented in Turrell's work echoes the 'already-there implicit' agreement of screen phenomenology – an arrangement of work that elicits an autonomous reaction in its viewer.

What then of the light emitting from the screen's aperture in my research outcomes?

Does this light similarly elicit an 'already-there implicit' agreement with the viewer?

Certainly, the emitted light presents its thinghood to the viewer, just as Turrell's does. But unlike Turrell's staging, works such as 'Nimbus I-III' attempt to present the screen's emitted light across a series of iterations of installed screen. There is an open invitation here to the viewer to approach the works, identify their emitted light, and critically respond to the different iterations of installed screen that make this usually invisible aspect of the work, visible. It is this position of self-led criticality that differentiates my work's light from Turrell's.

In the context of screen viewership, this emission is typically concealed, and by emphasising its revelation, by rendering the emitted light visible, viewers confront a presence that is typically hidden in viewing screen encounters. Such a stance sets it apart from other artists' explorations of light-as-material.

Hidden light

The primary motivation of this chapter is to present works that render the emitted light from the screen visible to the viewer. When access to this emitted light is permitted to the viewer, they may begin to develop a critical position themselves towards it. This is an important relationship to develop between the viewer and the viewing screen, as the

notion of the screen's hidden light is an intrinsic part of the staging of my practical outcomes, and indeed, of any viewing screen encounter.

Achieving the exposure of the hidden light in these works requires sensitivity to the context within which the work is staged. As such, the lighting conditions within the exhibition space are of particular importance. Dimmed lighting conditions expose this hidden light to a certain degree, though it is a darker staging that best highlights this phenomenon. Furthermore, the positioning of the installed screen is crucial: if the artwork's aperture sits next to a flush wall or floor surface, the emitted light is made clearly visible. Olafur Eliasson's light works are another useful point of reference here, having explored concepts of viewer immersion, and the spatial reordering provoked in light-based installation works such as 'Room for One Colour' (1997) or 'Your Double Lighthouse Projection' (2002). The common trait in these works, according to Aylish Wood in her text *Digital Encounters* is that "The bodies of viewers are literally part of the interface bathed in the same light as the installation, effectively making them an aspect of the screen" (Wood, 2007: 155).

It is, however, aspects of light retention in Eliasson's practice, such as within his work 'Your Colour Memory' (2004) (Fig. 89) that are useful to acknowledge. Mark Hansen explores the consequences of this work, proposing that it is "designed to catalyse the experience of after images and thereby to generate an experiential 'reflection' on colour sensation" (Hansen, 2013: 82). This work therefore imprints itself upon the viewer's retina: the echoes of the light experienced within the work's staging follow the viewer after experiencing it, with their perception adjusted and altered.



Fig. 89: Olafur Eliasson, 'Your colour memory' (2004), installation, Arcadia University Art Gallery, Glenside, Pennsylvania, photo: Aaron Igler

This oscillation between presence, subtraction and retention of light in the viewer has also been demonstrated in other artist's practices, with Antony Gormley's 'Breathing Room II' (2007) (Fig. 92) particularly demonstrating this concept. Here, an installation of interlocking fluorescent tubing arranged in modular frames invites the viewer to move within the structure, cultivating an immersive, meditative response. It is the work's sudden transition, plunging the exhibition space into bright light within the space, that creates the tension within the piece – a stark contrast to the insular experience that directly precedes it (Fig. 91).

The work therefore initially focuses the viewer's participation within the frame structures, and then exposes the architectural context in which these structures, and indeed the participants, are placed. The work then returns to its initial lighting, a vivid contrast that emboldens the two separate planes of perception present in the work. As the work returns from this bright revelatory moment towards its fluorescent format, the imprints of the work's light are still retained within the eye of those traversing the gallery space. The oscillation between these modes of lighting is therefore imprinted onto the viewers retina, operating in the viewer's ocular field in the aftermath of its repeated concealment and exposure. The light is still 'there' with the viewer, if only momentarily. The question here seems to be that of a retention, the processing of an amalgamative visual interaction with different stagings of light in the work – Gormley's light is rendered 'there' for the viewers to appraise, if only momentarily.

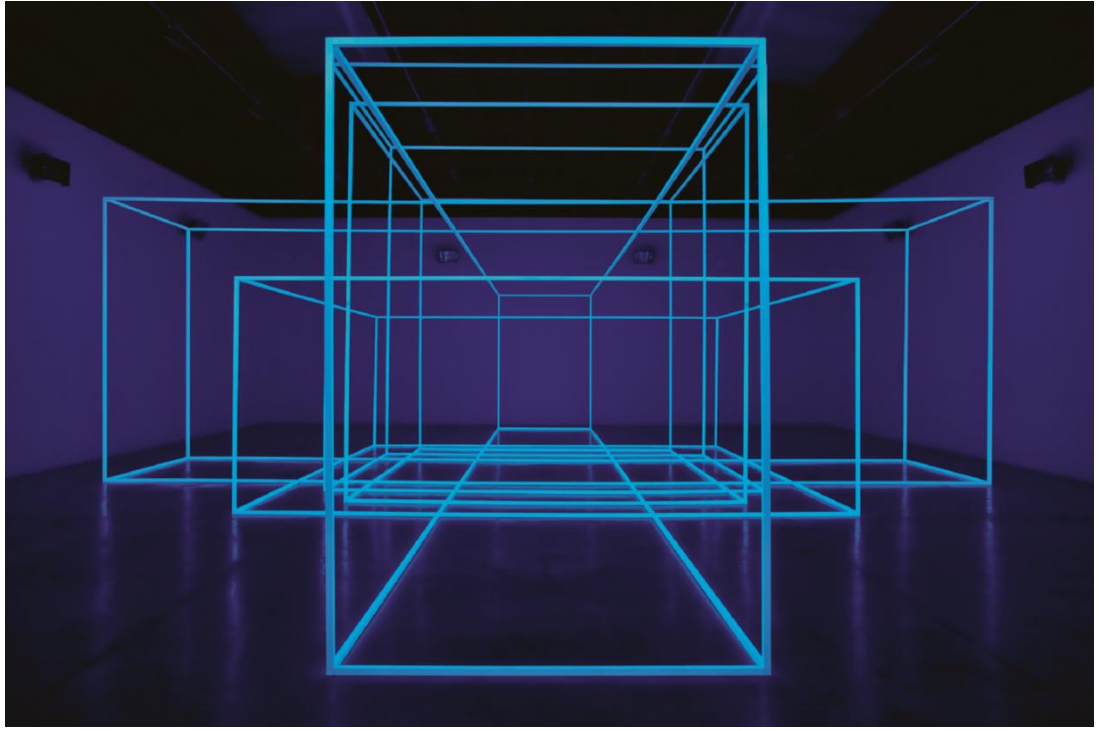


Fig. 90: Antony Gormley, 'Breathing Room II' (2010) sculpture, aluminium tube, 25 x 25 mm, phosphor H15 and plastic spigots, 385.9 x 856.9 x 928.1 cm

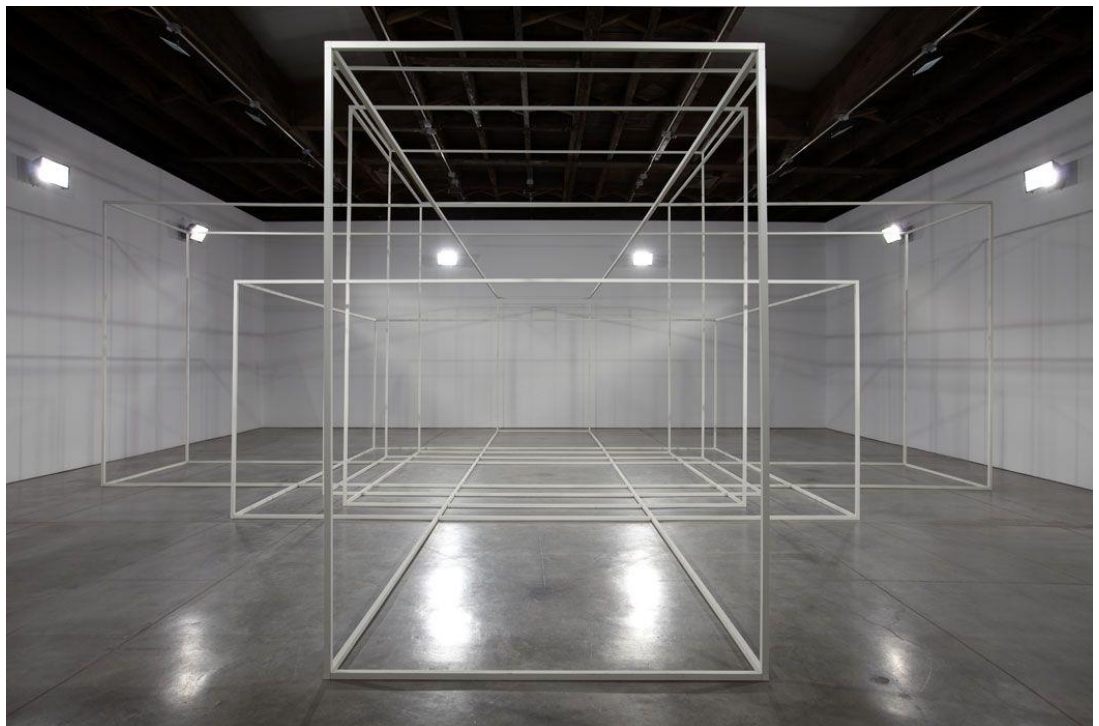


Fig. 91: Antony Gormley, 'Breathing Room II' (2010) sculpture, aluminium tube, 25 x 25 mm, phosphor H15 and plastic spigots, 385.9 x 856.9 x 928.1 cm

Gormley's and Eliasson's works give the viewer a momentary retention of light, employed as a means to interrogate the viewers relationships to perception and space. The practical outcomes of my research, in contrast, present this hidden light as perpetually 'there' for the viewer to access, more akin with the phenomenon of screen burn-in, common in older screening technologies that retain a ghost image after prolonged periods of static image display. Perhaps in some way this research's staging and capturing of the screen's emitted light offers a permanence that these other artists do not offer in their works. Exploring transient or temporary aspects of perception with regards to light practices, as conducted by Gormley and Eliasson, does not appear to be of much use to the screen's emitted light, as this runs covertly in perpetuity with every screening encounter.

THEOREM

This concept of the screen's perpetual hidden light emitted and captured for display to the viewer has become a clear factor in the most recent works generated for my research project. In July 2019, I was invited to participate in Anglia Ruskin University's annual PhD practice research symposium, THEOREM. This symposium featured PhD researchers from the Universities of Derby, Goldsmiths, Plymouth, Hertfordshire, and Cambridge School of Art/Anglia Ruskin, each delivering presentations on their doctoral research, as well as exhibiting their practice and research.

THEOREM presented the opportunity to refine the research outcome 'Nimbus I-III' in a fashion that highlighted this notion of the screen-as-emitter and its hidden light. In this iteration of 'Nimbus I-III' (Figs. 92-94) the two installed screens staged in vertical and horizontal orientations display this hidden light on the wall to which they are affixed. It is,

however, the presence of the third, central screen, front facing and reminiscent of the habitual screen encounter, that is key. By placing these three installed screens in a closer proximity with one another compared to previous exhibitions, the hidden light presented in the vertical and horizontal iterations accentuated the lack of this same phenomenon in the central iteration. That is to say, as the viewer acknowledges a presence of the hidden light in the two oblique iterations of the screen, then the central screen must too possess this hidden light, simply lacking a surface to project onto. In this way, 'Nimbus I-III' provides the viewer with the necessary critical toolset to appraise this emitted, hidden light as an already implicitly agreed-upon aspect of typical, frontal screen encounters. As such, it is one of the more significant findings from the experimental iterations employed as part of my research.

Summary

This restaging of 'Nimbus I-III' presents a distillation of the concepts explored throughout this thesis. Firstly, the aspect of the screen's objecthood is exposed to the viewer in the shape of the rugged materiality of the work. Secondly, the three different orientations of the screen engender an oblique, self-led engagement with the works, providing what I have earlier called 'emancipatory obliquity'. Much as in the case of 'Birds', the persistent image in 'Nimbus I-III' employs a perpetual temporal loop to generate a sense of melancholy, and a summative reparatory mourning in the viewer. It is in tandem with these other aspects of the research that 'Nimbus I-III' also emphasises the phenomenological aspects of the screen, particularly by rendering the typically hidden light of the viewing screen encounter visible. It is through each of these key thematic strands that 'Nimbus I-III' provokes a critical re-appraisal of the viewing screen.

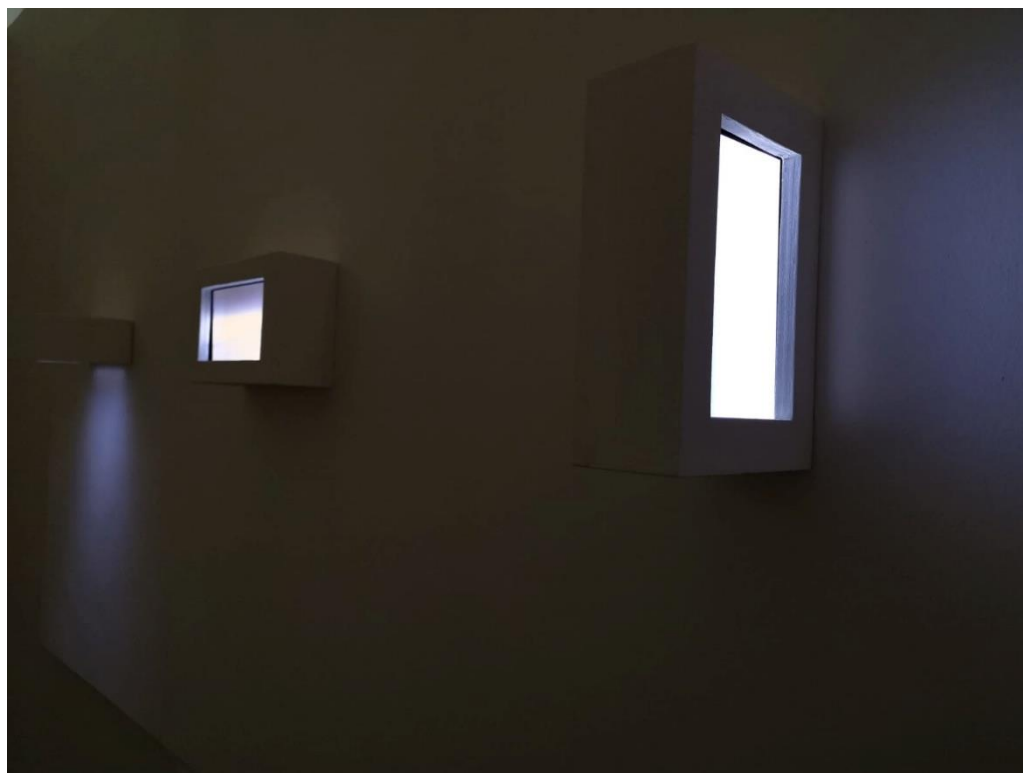


Fig. 92: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2019), video installation detail at Anglia Ruskin Gallery

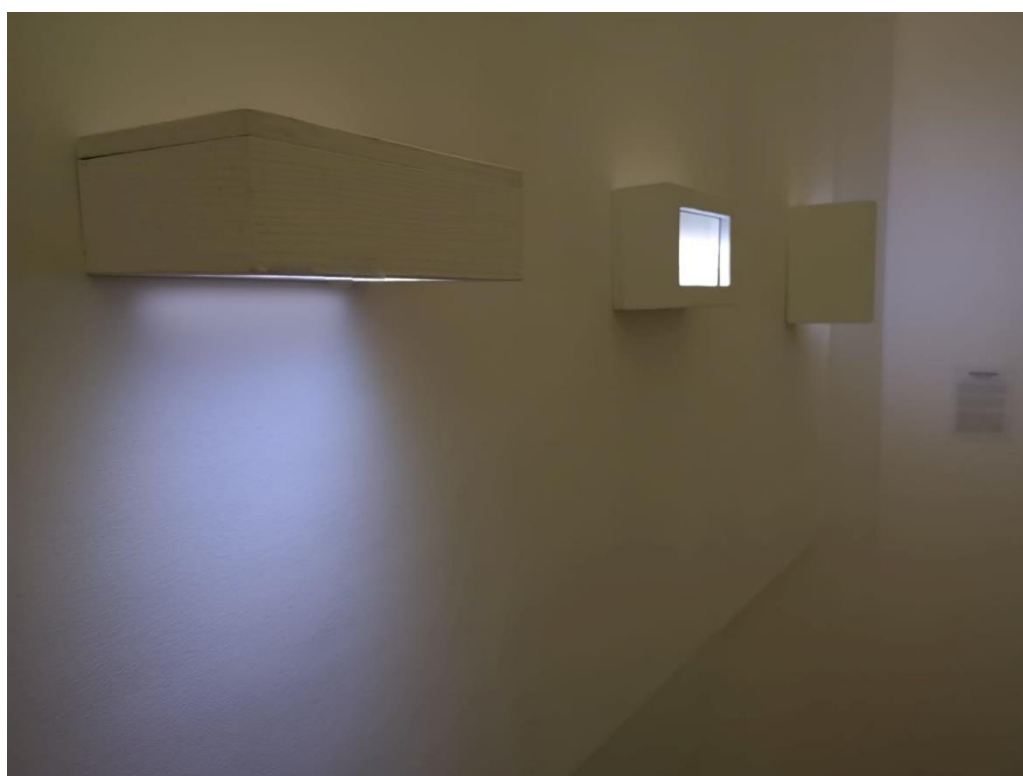


Fig. 93: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2019), video installation detail at Anglia Ruskin Gallery

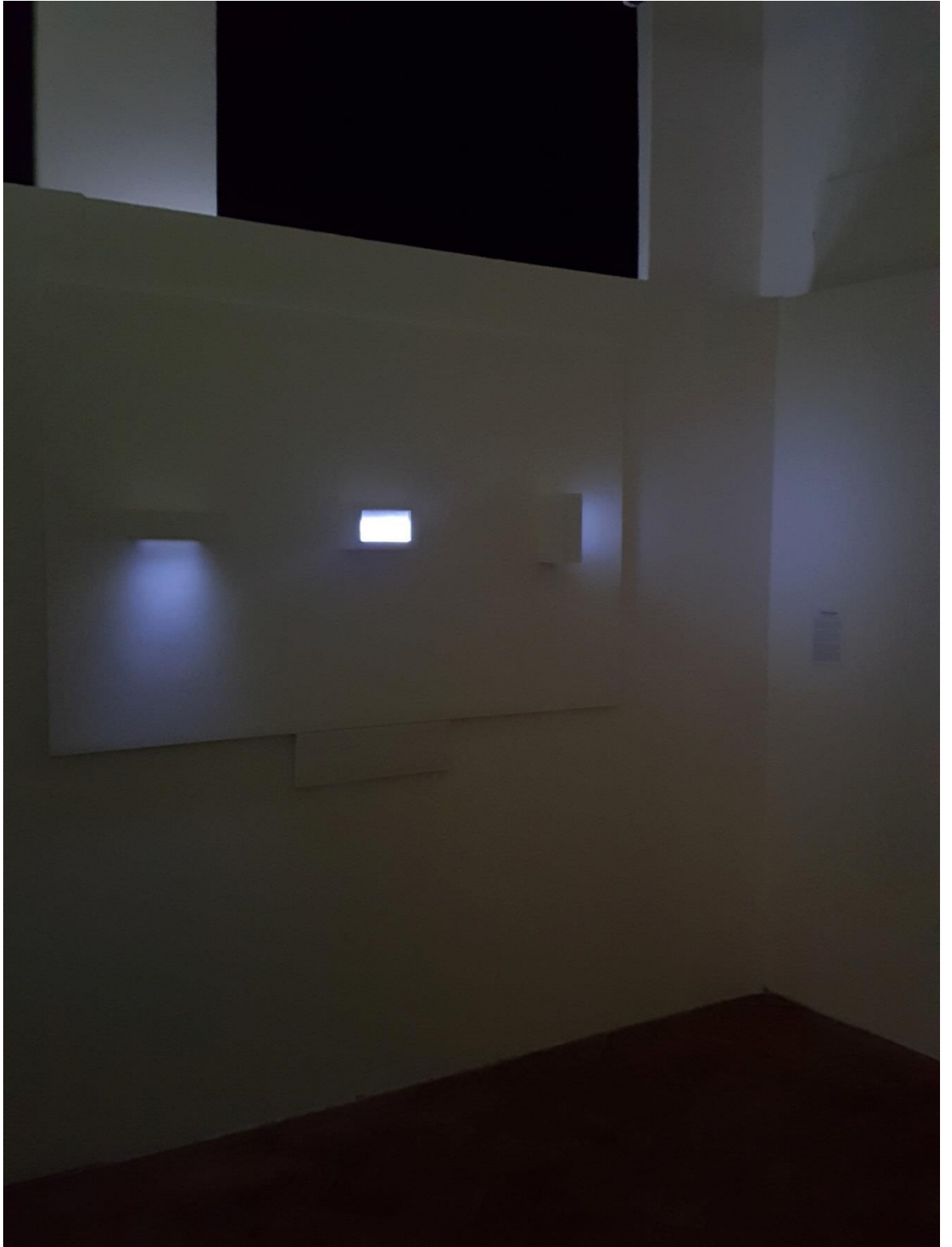


Fig. 94: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2019), video installation detail at Anglia Ruskin Gallery

Chapter 6: Moving Image Precedents

Range

Moving towards the conclusion of this thesis, a key omission must be acknowledged. Although each of the chapters previously featured in this thesis have incorporated examples of artists practicing in a variety of mediums, including painting, installation, sculpture and photography, two key areas remain only tentatively explored. There are considerably significant precedents located in the field of video art and expanded cinema that are useful to refer to as points of contextual reference. This chapter therefore serves as a partial overview (as opposed to a comprehensive historic study) of artists, artworks, and literature in the field of moving image and expanded cinema that have had some degree of influence upon or relevance to my own research, and therefore can clearly be articulated alongside its practical outcomes and concepts.

Including this chapter at a later stage of the thesis allows for key distinctions to emerge in relation to this research's contribution to knowledge. Having discussed this research project's key practical approaches and outcomes, and their associated conceptual frameworks through chapters 1-5, this chapter can therefore situate these findings within a wider context of relevant moving image practices. Such an approach permits a clear evaluation of the concepts and artworks established earlier in the thesis, and ultimately permits concise articulation of the unique position of this practice-led research and its contribution to knowledge.

Structural film

As these fields form such a densely rich history of potential resources to explore, presenting a deeper critical appraisal of a key topic featured earlier in this thesis – Structural film practices – provides a useful orientation point with which to begin this chapter. In his text, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde, 1943-2000*, P. Adams Sitney defines the typical Structural film as contrary to the “movement toward increased cinematic complexity” (Sitney, 2002: 347) present in American avant-garde cinema between the late 1940s and the mid-1960s. According to Sitney, Structural filmmakers generate works ‘in which the shape of the whole film is predetermined and simplified, and it is that shape which is the primal impression of the film’ (Sitney, 2002: 348). It is therefore the material qualities of the film itself, (the filming equipment, or techniques employed to generate the film) as opposed to aspects of visual representation, that are often the primary site of investigation in structural works. Sitney reiterates these key attributes in his statement that the “Structural film insists on its shape, and what content it has is minimal and subsidiary to the outline” (Ibid.).

Michael Snow

It is these key tenets of Structural film that provided some degree of interplay and correlation with concepts and works generated in this research project, particularly its early stages, and works that attempt to seek critical engagement with the material quality, or objecthood of the screen. Revisiting the practice of Michael Snow – having already featured in this thesis’s second chapter with his anti-illusionary video installation, ‘Two Sides to Every Story’ (1974) (page 47) – offers further points for consideration.

Snow's lauded work 'Wavelength' (1967) (Fig. 95) is not an uncommon reference when discussing landmark contributions to the Structural film movement. The work's primary feature is a 45-minute-long zoom towards a photograph located on the opposite wall across a New York loft, interspersed with 4 sequential events, each featuring human figures interacting in a variety of ways. These events also interlace with the work's sound; a collection of contrasting elements such as music, the speech of the figures present within the work, and a persistent sine wave. The work's true aim, however, concerns itself with eliding these elements present within the work's visual and sonic parameters.

Snow's own statement regarding the work helps unravel this notion, with the artist stating that 'Wavelength' represents an opportunity to "to make a definitive statement of pure Film space and time, a balancing of 'illusion' and 'fact', all about seeing" (Snow and Dompierre 2006: 40). Snow's concern here lies with circumnavigating a meaningful depiction of the series of "human events" (Snow and Dompierre 2006: 45) present within the work – these aspects are bypassed as the work's zoom relentlessly proceeds towards its end. Instead, the technical and material qualities that comprise the work, and beyond that, the conceptual and existential concerns of the artist himself come to the foreground – Snow states that the work is a "summation of my nervous system, religious inklings, and aesthetic ideas... a time monument in which the beauty and sadness of equivalence would be celebrated" (Snow and Dompierre 2006: 40).

This overarching sense of the technical and conceptual parameters of the work taking precedent over those of the film's implied narrative aspects is what is commonly cited as one of 'Wavelength's triumphs. In her appraisal of 'Wavelength', Annette Michelson states that the "film is the projection of a grand reduction; its 'plot' is the tracing of

spatiotemporal données; its 'action' the movement of the camera as a movement of awareness developing slowly" (Michelson and White, 2019: 6). To Michelson, 'Wavelength' embodies the key characteristics of Structural film-making at a time in the history of the American avant-garde "when the assertive editing, super imposition, the insistence on the presence of the filmmaker behind the moving, hand-held instrument, and its resulting disjunctive, gestural facture had conduced to destroy that spatiotemporal continually which had sustained narrative convention" (Michelson and White, 2019: 7).

'Wavelength' therefore acted as a countermeasure to established filmic practices and habitual viewing regimes at the time of its release. The journey present in the work encourages critical self-reflection in its viewer by arresting expectation regarding any perceived narrative, divorcing the viewer from accessing any habitual or hierarchical engagement with the on screen representation, instead presenting the setting and the action which take place within the work as "cosmically equivalent" (Snow and Dompierre 2006: 40). This notion is perhaps best summarised in Martha Langford's appraisal of 'Wavelength' as she discusses the work's legacy as a landmark Structural film being largely owed to "having resolved in a perfectly integrated and remarkably efficient form the emerging desire among experimental filmmakers for simplicity and directness of cinematic expression, and for making imaginative use of the specific properties of the medium" (Langford, 2014: 15).



Fig. 95: Michael Snow, 'Wavelength' (1967), 16mm film still

'Wavelength' therefore runs parallel to several of the key concepts explored as part of this research. Firstly, the anti-illusionary, anti-narrative aspects of 'Wavelength' are similarly explored throughout various research outcomes located in chapter 4: The Problematic Image. Furthermore, the technical parameter of the work, the persistent zooming motion that upends any sense of an established narrative provides some points for consideration alongside some aspects present in chapter 3: Screen and Mobility. To recap, the mobility engendered by research outcomes in this chapter deter the viewer's habitual spatial encounter with the screen in order to promote criticality with the screen (achieved via transgression, or the notional 'emancipatory obliquity'). 'Wavelength', although admittedly purporting an on screen-mobility as opposed to a viewer mobility, does still elicit a sense of an alternative, critical perspective in its viewer. The zoom motion present in the work provokes viewers to critically appraise the structural aspects of the work that would otherwise be stultified by perceived narrative. Emphasising this position of criticality is where some degree of similarity between the on-screen mobility in 'Wavelength' and the mobility in my own works lies.

Peter Gidal

Peter Gidal is another key contributing literary voice and visual practitioner in Structural film, providing further detail on the parameters of the works and concepts that drive the movement. At the start of his text *Structural Film Anthology*, Gidal takes the opportunity to define Structural film from his own perspective, noting that "Structural/ Materialist film attempts to be non-illusionist. The process of the film's making deals with devices that result in demystification or attempted demystification of the film process" and that "Structural/ Materialist film, the in/film (not in/frame) and film/viewer material relations,

and the relations of the film's structure, are primary to any representational content” (Gidal, 1976: 1).

Gidal's points regarding the nature of Structural film closely resemble those outlined by Sitney at the opening of this chapter, although Gidal elaborates upon a critical, nuanced aspect of the Structural film approach, stating that “the specific construct of each film is not the relevant point; one must beware not to let the construct, the shape, take the place of the ‘story’ in narrative film. Then one would merely be substituting one hierarchy for another within the same system, a formalism for what is traditionally called content” (Ibid.). The distinction Gidal is making regarding Structural film outlines a careful conceptual balance – no part of the resulting work, including the aspects that might be considered canonically ‘Structural’ should result in a perceived narrative in the viewer. Such remarks bear some resemblance to Jacques Rancière's concept of the paradox of establishing true emancipation for the spectator as outlined in chapter 3 of this thesis: Screen and Mobility, in the sense that if an artwork is designed to emancipate, by virtue of this design, the work fails to become emancipatory. In order for Structural films to succeed at their conceptual goal, the film maker must remain sensitive towards the structural parameters of the film they create, lest they become the very same antithetical narrative articles that Structural films attempt to subvert.

In terms of his body of work, Gidal's film ‘Clouds’ (1969) (Fig. 96) is a key work to reference in relation to the tenets of Structural film, but also as a key influence on some of the practical outcomes generated as part of this research project. ‘Clouds’ comprises a ten minute film featuring a looped image of the sky, occasionally introducing fleeting glimpses of a building, an aeroplane, and the titular clouds themselves. Gidal's conscious

subversion of viewers desire for narrative establishes a sense of an anti-illusion. Gidal himself remarks, that the “anti-illusionistic project engaged by *Clouds* is that of dialectic [sic] materialism. There is virtually nothing ON screen, in the sense of IN screen. Obsessive repetition as materialist practice, not psychoanalytic indulgence” (Gidal, Nov 1975).

Admittedly, ‘*Clouds*’ resembles some of the key characteristics of the works featured in chapter 4 of this thesis: **The Problematic image**, particularly those that attempt to deliver the chapter’s key conceptual framework and outcome, ‘The persistent image’. For instance, my own research outcomes ‘*Nimbus I-III*’ (2018) and ‘*Birds*’ (2016) resemble the anti-illusionist, anti-narrative features in Gidal’s work, including their austere use of visual representation and cyclical temporal parameter. The crucial distinction between Gidal’s ‘*Clouds*’ and my own research outcomes, however, are the distinct aspects that comprise the *mise-en-scène* of the latter – the screen’s rudimentary objecthood presented in tandem with the depicted image, as well as the various installation orientations on display in ‘*Nimbus I-III*’. In addition to these elements is the implied functionality from the specific scale of my works, each of which are no larger than 7 inches, and therefore synonymous with contemporary everyday usage. These aspects operate in tandem with the visual component of my works – a step further toward the post-mourning reparatory engagement with the screen structure that ‘the persistent image’ engenders.



Fig. 96: Peter Gidal, 'Clouds' (1969), 16mm film still

Temporality

One of the key aspects of Structural film that Gidal discusses at great length is the manipulation of temporal dimensions in his films. Temporal manipulations have been a constant presence in my own research, and a site for some of the more valuable developments in my research outcomes. Malcolm Le Grice's work, 'Berlin Horse' (1970) (Fig. 97) is a useful Structural film to cite in relation to this topic. Le Grice's work aims to explore the differences between the time in which the film was shot, and time which exists as the film is screened, employing a series of technical manipulations on the film to achieve this.

In terms of the technical processes that generated the work, 'Berlin Horse' is comprised of two continually looping, merged instances of film footage; the first piece being original footage shot by the artist near Berlin in 8mm colour and later re-filmed from the screen in 16mm black and white, whilst the second piece is taken from Thomas Edison's 'The Burning Stable' (1896) that features a related subject – imagery of stable hands rescuing horses from a burning stable. These separate fragments of footage are woven together alongside the pieces' audio element, notably created by the musician Brian Eno, itself featuring a similar looped pattern to accompany the visual elements of the work. For A.L. Rees, Le Grice's manipulations present a gainful opportunity to stretch and explore the boundaries of the film medium itself, stating that 'Berlin Horse' "exploits the limitations of these conditions as one of its major strengths" (Rees, 2007: 65) and that by "re-filming from the screen, blowing up formats, using negative and roughly reprinting grainy black-and-white in fulsome colour, Le Grice expands his minimal if powerful source material" (Rees, 2007: 66).



Fig. 97: Malcolm Le Grice, 'Berlin Horse' (1975), 16mm film still

It is, however, the looping temporal aspect of the work that stands as its most defining characteristic. Discussing 'Berlin Horse' in his text *Materialist Film*, Peter Gidal states:

In the series of loops making up the film... the expectancy manipulation of fear and anxiety, which is constantly re-established through the loop of the burning horse/running horse image, becomes 'the same' again and again. Yet it is never the same. The question of sameness thus only instantiates itself via the splice's intervention on the continuum of documented action. (Gidal, 1989 :107)

Gidal's assertion that 'Berlin Horse' and its closed loop on screen bestows a sense of anxiety in the viewer resembles aspects of this thesis' notional 'Persistent Image' as outlined in chapter 4: The Problematic image. For works that employ the 'Persistent Image', instilling viewer anxiety is one key aspect in a sequence of reactions that result in a heightened criticality towards the viewing screen, feeding into Darian Leader's concepts of absence (in this case, of an authentic on-screen image) and resulting reparatory mourning.

One key element that Gidal notes regarding 'Berlin Horse' is the sense that the physical splice employed on the film strip, and the subsequent loop generated in-film, is itself a key materialist characteristic of the work. Gidal states that:

...the splice, projected, is not simply another abstracted image, but rather a process, the holding together or not of two disparate, or continuous, strips of film. The splice then becomes simultaneously the interruptive and the facilitator of a form of continuity. The splice's contradictory function, image, and process,

interruptive *and* its opposite, is produced in films which do not *codify* its suppression. (Gidal, 1989: 108-109)

The splice therefore occupies a paradoxical role in the fabric of the analogue film, in that it involves both the physical disassembly and restructure on the film material itself, an intervention that becomes the sole proprietor of its renewed continuity in the shape of its temporal loop. Defining the parameters of the loop in analogue films in such a way begins to shape a clear counter position to the digital works, and their respective temporal alterations present throughout this research's body of practice.

Physical edits

Another useful point of reference to make in regarding such physical edits on analogue film is David Parsons' Structural film 'Mechanical Ballet' (1975) (Fig. 98). Parsons' various areas of concern intersect in 'Mechanical Ballet', from manipulations of found film footage including the film strip and film frame, to the film printing process, the time and duration of the work, projection and the screen. According to Joy I. Payne, Parsons' dramatic interventions on the original found footage serve one key purpose, to illustrate "the time and effort invested by experimental film-makers in the process of film-making, the way in which old footage can be used as raw film, reworked and transformed into something entirely different" (Payne, 2015: 142). Indeed, this sentiment is echoed by Parsons himself, stating that the work is an attempt to make the viewer aware of "staggered progress of the film through the gate" (Parsons, 1977: 11).

As a result, the core concerns of the typical Structural film are present within 'Mechanical Ballet', as the work is predominantly preoccupied with a demystification of the filmic processes that bring moving image into being. What is particularly useful to note regarding Parsons' methodology, is the sheer number of his interventions upon the original found footage present in the work, as well as their varying make up. These interactions are so densely layered that the original motive of the footage is completely divorced from the resulting work, or, as Payne notes, "Parsons' methodology demonstrates the way in which film-makers were able to stretch their filmic materials and techniques to the limit in order to achieve their aims" (Payne, 2015: 142).

Naturally, these editing processes present in Parsons' 'Mechanical Ballet' differ from those applied in my own research, and understandably so, given the year in which this work was conceived. Parsons laboured re-editing and physical manipulation of the original 16mm film present in the work starkly contrasts with the digital distortions and effects available to my own research during their editing process. What begins to present itself when studying Structural film making alongside the research outcomes in this thesis, is that despite several conceptual and theoretical crossovers, key limitations arise. This is largely owed to vastly different technological parameters of the works, from the filming apparatus, modes of editing, and display apparatus employed.

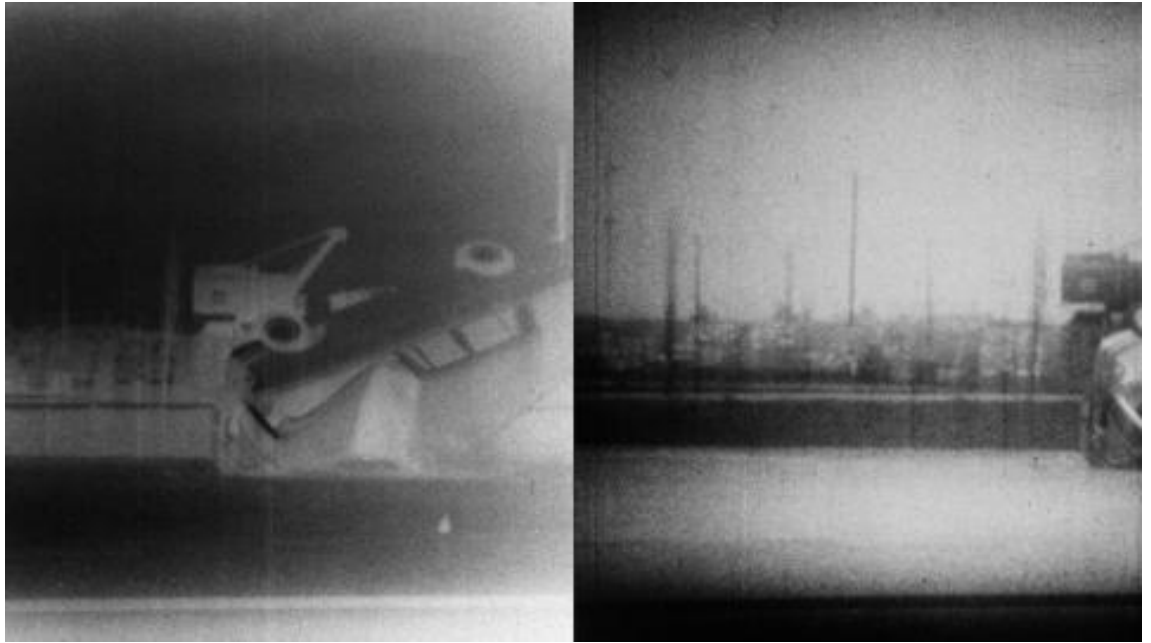


Fig. 98: David Parsons, 'Mechanical Ballet' (1975), 16mm film still

Digital edits

This notion of key conceptual and technological differences arising between analogue and digital moving image practices can be further illustrated by exploring similar temporal manipulations in video art practices. Bill Viola's works are a useful reference to include in terms of temporal experimentation in video as Viola is known to employ a range of temporal edits in his works to explore fundamental themes of human experiences, including birth, death, consciousness, and spirituality. The breadth of such topics have resulted in critical parallels drawn between Viola's works and renaissance devotional painting practices. Furthermore, Chris Darke states that "Viola has admitted that many of his tapes throughout the 1970-s were 'structural' in approach" (Darke, 2000: 182) and often therefore employ similar techniques to situate the viewer in a critical position towards their relationship with moving image.

Viola's piece 'The Reflecting Pool' (1977) (Fig. 99) introduces the "ambiguity of vision as a theme to be explored through an emphasis on temporal duration and in relation to landscape" (Ibid.) The temporal aspect of the work consists of "real-time, still and time-lapse effects" (Ibid.), effectively generating a hybridised site of temporal zones. These juxtaposing zones include a total temporal arrest at the top of the image, freezing the human figure before it takes the plunge into the piece's eponymous pool. This temporal imposition on the depicted landscape relates to the various examples of my own research outcomes that similarly explore distorting temporal and spatial themes in landscape imagery.



Fig. 99: Bill Viola, 'The Reflecting Pool' (1977), video still

In his text, *The Unspeakable Art of Bill Viola : A Visual Theology*, Ronald R Bernier ascertains that Viola's work "offers a possible point of intervention in thinking about the sublime, particularly with respect to (Viola's) treatment of extended perception" (Bernier, 2014: 42). Bernier here refers to Viola's use of prolonged slow motion in his works, a key aspect present in pieces such as 'Fire Woman' (2005) (Fig. 100) or 'Tristan's Ascension (The Sound of a Mountain Under a Waterfall)' (2005) (Fig. 101), asserting that lengthening time in this way "initiates the sublime in (Viola's) work, work that requires patience, attention, and slowing down" (Ibid.). Bernier states that by extending the duration of his pieces in such a fashion, Viola presents a mode of temporality that resembles Henri Bergson's notion of a 'psychological time', or a zone of perception that presents time "not, in the mathematical, scientific notion of time, as a sequence of successive, atomistic, and discrete moments—the time of clocks—but as a multiplicity continually unfolding in 'duration'" (Bernier, 2014: 43).

Viola's video-based temporal distortions therefore "extend the moment of viewing into a time of attentiveness and receptivity, wherein what is captured is, in a sense, the *invisible*" (Ibid.) This notion of the 'invisible' is in fact an invitation for the viewer to "imagine a process "before" signification or coding, a "pre-linguistic" experience, and thus a shift from the (modernist) certainties of mechanism to the (postmodern) potentialities/anxieties of indeterminacy" (Bernier, 2014: 49). This notion is supported by A.L Rees, who states that "if film was a technology of the indexical, video gave artists the means to articulate a time-based language of the unseeable" (Rees, 2010: 263). The sequence of reactions generated from the hyper extension of time in Viola's works therefore situate the viewer in an indeterminate, critical position to temporality, thereby subverting viewer's understanding of the typically rigid and sequential phenomena.



Figs. 100 and 101: Bill Viola, 'Fire Woman' (2005), video installation (left) and 'Tristan's Ascension (The Sound of a Mountain Under a Waterfall)' (2005), video installation (right)

As previously mentioned, Viola's imagery bears considerable resemblance to the historical painting practices of the old masters, and their subsequent study of theological themes. By situating his temporal distortions alongside such vivid imagery, viewer criticality emerges from connotative association with religious or spiritual themes, an aspect Viola further exaggerates in his 2017 show 'Electronic Renaissance' at the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi In Florence, which situates various of his video works alongside classic Italian renaissance paintings.

Other artists practices situate their temporal distortions in less spiritual imagery, allowing examination of familiar contexts or everyday occurrences. Susan Hiller's 'An Entertainment' (1990) (Fig. 102) is a large scale video installation that features four projected images of a Punch and Judy puppet show, with Hiller stretching the temporal aspect of the work in such a way that the casual comedic connotations of the on-screen performance manifest as decidedly menacing. What was once a form of children's entertainment transforms into an aggressive encounter between the two parties as the work's audio becomes disconnected and nonsynchronous, with instances of audience laughter displaced at inappropriate junctures of the piece's 26-minute running time. It is within this distorted yet familiar space that Hiller lays the foundation for a deeper sense of criticality within the work's viewer. Alexandra Kokoli writes that the piece is not a "polemical critique of the popular spectacle but, strangely, an almost sympathetic and certainly respectful exploration of its potential for collective contemplation and lucid reverie" (Gallagher, 2011: 147). Here the viewer enters a familiar viewing regime, expecting a performance of a recognisable narrative. What unfolds is a calculated dismantling of this familiarity, instead promoting critical reflection in the viewer.

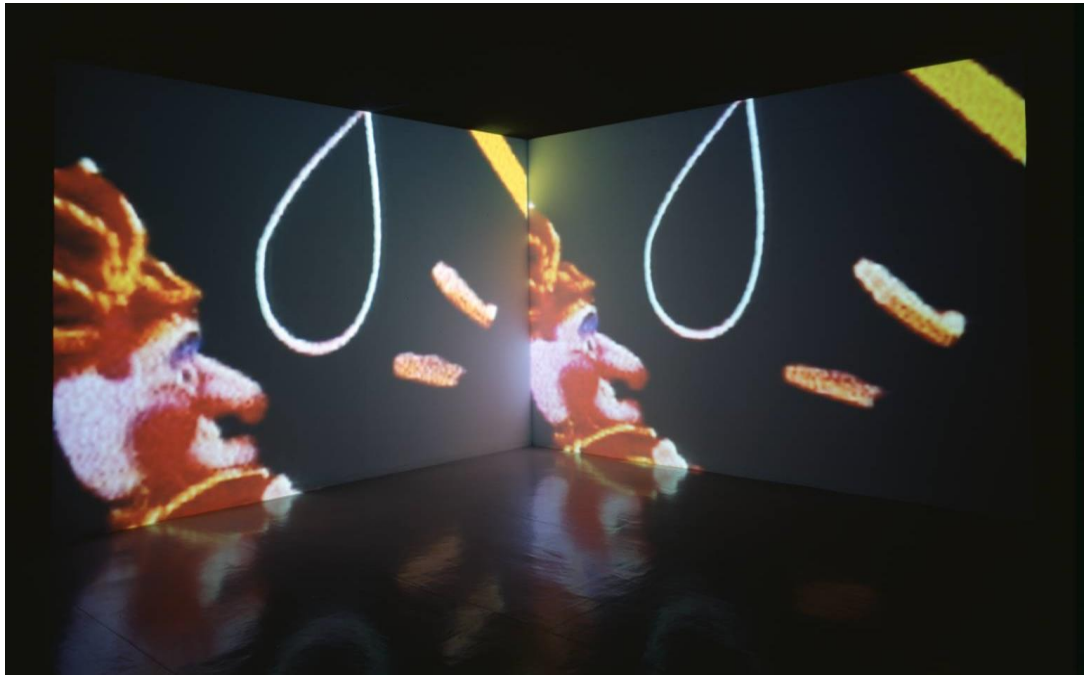


Fig. 102: Susan Hiller, 'An Entertainment' (1990), video and sound installation



Fig. 103: Douglas Gordon, '24 hour Psycho' (1993), video installation

Such deconstruction of familiarity by dramatically stretching out the temporal values of video works harkens to other works such as Douglas Gordon's 'Twenty Four Psycho' (1993) (Fig. 103). Gordon appropriates Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film 'Psycho', stretched to extremity from its original running time to a 24 hour duration which significantly alters the viewer's perceptions of time. Sylvia Martin notes that Gordon's radical slowing of such a recognisable piece of film footage leads viewers that are familiar with the film to "mentally add foregoing and succeeding events to the moment of viewing the image – that is, completing the story either before or after it has taken place on screen" (Martin, 2006: 52).

Additionally, the fact that the work employs its temporal distortion upon a video conversion of the original celluloid format of Hitchcock's film is significant. Gordon's temporal stretch would only seamlessly operate in the video medium – similar edits on an analogue format would "result in flickering and, although it would show changes in small steps, these would be abrupt" (ibid.). Martin states that the same effect, applied to the video conversion present in the final work "allows every moment of the film to remain as an icon, simultaneously leaving the flow of pictures uninterrupted" (ibid.). In this way Gordon, like Viola, generates a field of extended perception within which the viewer can critically engage with his imagery.

Viola, Hiller and Gordon's works become emblematic of the dichotomy between the temporal practices employed onto the physical formats present in Structural film, and the digital edits present in the video medium. Gidal's assertion that the splice and subsequent loops employed by works such as Le Grice's 'Berlin Horse' activates vastly different conceptual considerations than the hyperextension, or extended perception of temporal

parameters in video arts practices. Indeed, since the same physical splice could not be employed upon a digital film, it would, by virtue of its digitisation, be a simulation of the aforementioned paradoxical characteristics. This is not to say digital editing practices present a somehow diminished or inferior position to the analogue practice, but instead directly addresses the potential of these two very different, intrinsically related mediums.

Digital edits present opportunities to explore temporal themes in wholly different ways, unlocking new possibilities and points for critical reflection in the viewer as a result.

Perhaps the most polemical artwork to discuss regarding the digital temporal edit is Christian Marclay's video piece, 'The Clock' (2010) (Fig. 104). This is cited as a behemoth *memento mori*, as a result of the work's constant visual and audio cues reminding the viewer the amount of time in which they have engaged with the work. This aspect is further heightened by its depictions of actors performing various roles throughout their lives depicted on screen, as well as other subjects, such as wilting flowers, burning cigarettes and sunsets, each degenerating in turn. Lee Carruthers states in his text *Doing Time: Temporality, Hermeneutics, and Contemporary Cinema*, that by "its continual referencing of time, *The Clock* causes us to notice the temporal markers of narrative cinema as oddly detached from the energies of their diegetic contexts. Within these workings, time rises to the surface, and narrative motivation withdraws" (Carruthers, 2016: 22). Carruthers therefore suggests that Marclay's piece demonstrates, to some extent, the same relegation of narrative aspects present in Structural film practices. This indicates potential for some moments of parity between digital and Structural film practices, a legacy of the experimental expanded cinema practices upon which many contemporary video artworks are built.

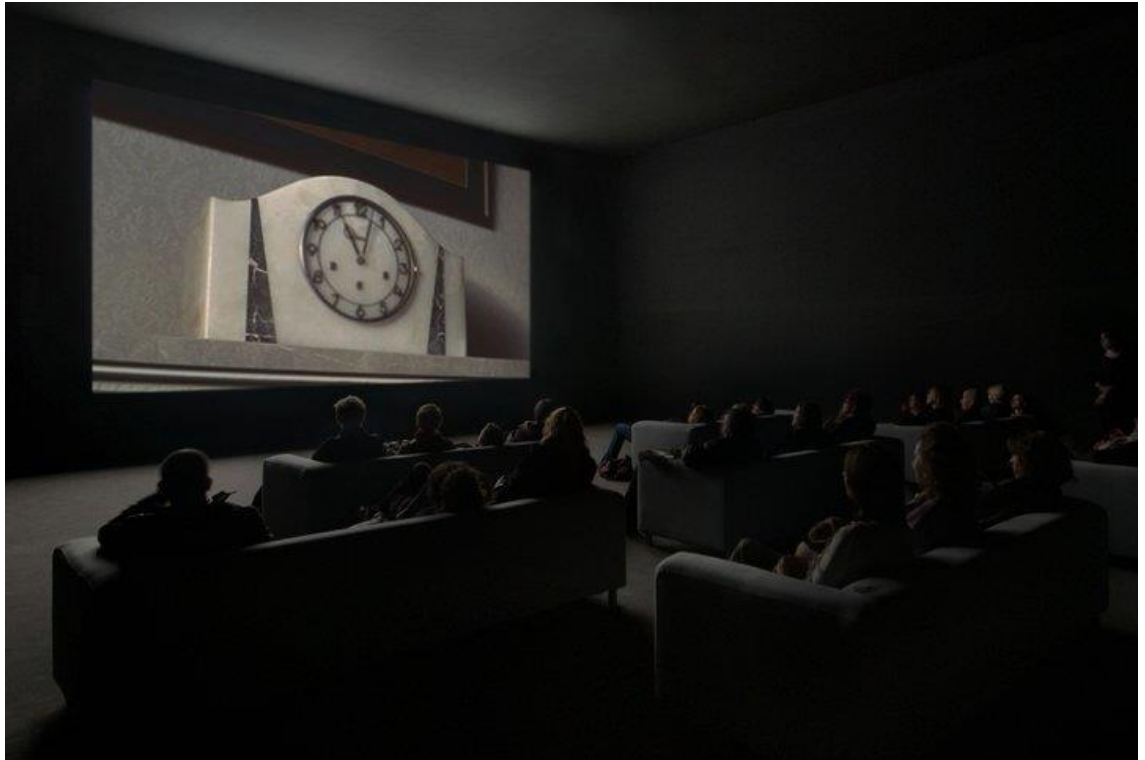


Fig. 104: Christian Marclay, 'The Clock' (2010), single channel video, duration: 24 hours,

White Cube, photo: Ben Westoby

Relation

Having developed a sense of discord and harmony between Structural film practices and digital practices, it is worth restating the myriad of influential effects Structural film and its practitioners have had on the development of concepts and works throughout this research project. Some of the key findings and developments in this research project owe a great deal to Structural film practices, firstly, and most predominantly, this research's overarching attempt to deter viewer engagement with the viewing screen content, and instead promote an activate criticality towards the viewing screen itself, as consistently discussed throughout each chapter of this thesis and their respective conceptual frameworks and research outcomes. This, of course, mirrors the Structural film's attempts to motivate engagement with material or the formal parameters of filmic process, as opposed to narrative or content.

The specific methods employed in Structural film to reach this goal, such as the rigid mobility and temporal distortions, are other key points of symmetry in relation to this research. Both of these aspects have contributed to major successes in practical experimentation (particularly those located in chapters 3 and 4) and therefore have been paramount in their contribution to reaching this research's aims and objectives.

Despite these useful points of symmetry, it must be said that there are limitations when contextualising this research alongside Structural film approaches, largely owed to the filming technology employed to the artists at the time. Structural film makers employed analogue devices and techniques to explore their concepts, born from an intent to disrupt or challenge conventional filmic processes or narrative in American avant-garde film

making. In contrast, the videos, effects, and technology employed throughout this research project are entirely digital in their make-up, and therefore construct their argument based on the proliferation of screen-based technology in the everyday, the resulting embedded viewing regimes of their viewers, and increased sense of invisibility of the screen structure itself.

This sub-section has attempted to outline this research project's close relationship with Structural film practices. This research's attempt to disrupt this sense of an increasingly invisible, pervasive screening technology in favour of critical appraisal of the viewing screen certainly echoes with some of the key values of Structural film. Structural film therefore provides a useful point of reference when discussing other key figures practicing in video art and installation and their focus on mass proliferation of digital and electronic technologies in the everyday.

Nam June Paik

Structural film practices sit as preface to works that made comment on the increasing influence of digital technology, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century. Perhaps the most relevant artist to embody and explore this sense of increasingly pervasive digital technology is Nam June Paik. Paik's pioneering works take their aim at the burgeoning sense of technological development that would soon become intrinsic aspects of contemporary society, and as a result, are frequently referred to as somewhat clairvoyant in their nature.

Paik's highly experimental practice features various outcomes ranging from relational

electronic sculptures, performance pieces, and prominent use of screening technologies as sculptural aspects of installations, as well as composition of experimental music and sound art. Many of these works are routinely re-arranged for each exhibition, contributing to a sense of an iterative body of work, deploying varying technology to explore the artist's thematic and conceptual concerns.

Having had the opportunity to view Paik's retrospective exhibition at the Tate Modern in December 2019, collecting some thoughts on works on display as part of this exhibition, particularly those that resonated strongly with the ongoing concepts in my own research, seems pertinent. Moreover, many equally vital resources emerge and correlate around the central themes and concepts in Paik's practice, effectively creating a template for further contextual research to arise.

Live feed

Paik's 'TV Buddha' (1974) (Fig. 105) features an eighteenth century statue of Buddha sat directly opposite from both a video camera and small television, themselves generating a live recording of an image of the statue. This supposed simplicity of the work belies its multitude of potential thematic readings, from the Buddha, an historic spiritual symbol of contemplation or enlightenment confronting two key icons of modern technology, to their interplay with one another resulting in the Buddha's image perpetually caught on screen, gazing directly back at itself. By establishing the position of the Buddha as simultaneously the viewer of, and the viewed upon, the screen, Paik draws a parallel to the public's own reliant relationship towards mass media.

Instigating viewer critical reflexivity towards technological interdependence was perhaps

most exemplified in 1974 when Paik replaced the Buddha statue with his own body, presenting a live self-portrait on the accompanying display screen, thus challenging “the concept of the body as the ‘screen’ on which the prevailing codes of culture are continually projected and through which identity is determined” (Garoian and Gaudelius, 2008 : 97). In this way, ‘TV Buddha’ supplements (or perhaps predates) the increasing sense of the human body under threat by the pervasive ‘electronic presence’ generated by mass digital screening technology as outlined by Vivian Sobchack in this thesis (see discussion on page 37). Such critical positioning offered by Paik is a key factor to consider alongside this research and its outcomes and motivates its overarching aim for criticality towards the viewing screen.



Fig. 105: Nam June Paik, 'TV Buddha' (1974), installation view, Tate Modern 2019. photo:

Andrew Dunkley

Live disruption

This sense of the body's relationship to the technological developments in the latter part of the 20th century pervades Paik's practice. The live aspect of 'TV Buddha' – the perpetual video feed that captured and displayed the subject in real-time – is an element that Paik explored in a number of different works at different points of his career. These live aspects often emerged as relational artworks that invited audience intervention or participation, including 'Foot Switch Experiment' (1963) wherein the image on screen could be altered in real time with the pressing of a footswitch. Paik's works also included live manipulations of screened images by interfering with the electrical signals that comprised older screening technologies' images. This included works such as 'Magnet TV' (1965) (Fig. 106), where the on-screen image is radically distorted to abstraction by the presence of an attached industrial sized magnet. Establishing this sense of a live interplay or feedback element in the work unlocked potential for relational works that increasingly involved audience participation.



Fig. 106: Nam Jun Paik, 'TV Magnet' (1965), modified black and white television set and magnet, 98.4 × 48.9 × 62.2 cm

David Hall

This aspect of Paik's work bears some resemblance to the disruptions and degradation present in David Hall's 'This is a Television Receiver' (1976) (Fig. 71 – see discussion on page 183). Further to this, and perhaps what becomes most crucial in relation to this sense of taking live interruption of everyday screen viewership is Hall's earlier work 'TV Interruptions' (1971). In its original format, 'TV Interruptions' featured a series of short film works originally broadcast as television interventions as part of the Edinburgh Festival of the same year, including 'Tap Piece' (1971) (Fig. 107) featured below.

Hall's motivations for the works were multifaceted, firstly, the lack of critical representation of the video art medium in a fine art context. According to Chris Meigh-Andrews in his text *A History of Video Art*, Hall was "staking a claim for video art as an autonomous art form" (Meigh-Andrews, 2006: 60) and particularly concerned that at the time "there was no historical precedence and/or established practice for video art from which it could develop a theoretical and critical base" and also "a reluctance on the part of the art establishment to embrace the discourse of 'electronic media'" (Ibid.).

Hall was also predominantly interested in the subversion of, or intervention in, habitual modes of screen viewership – particularly broadcast television. The series of films comprising 'TV Interruptions' were broadcast without any announcement, title, credit, or identifiable authorship, which itself was a key aspect of the work. This anonymity was crucial for Hall, in that usurping the habitual context in which viewers would engage with moving image, would "create a break in the flow of the viewer's potential relationship to his/her television receiver" (Ibid.).

'TV Interruptions' would later be re-staged for exhibition in 2006, featuring the seven contributing works occupying the same gallery space together in the form of an installation (Fig. 108). This configuration allows the work to take on another meaning, a chaotic interconnected series of sounds and images that disorientate the viewer, comparable to the disruptions experienced by the work's original viewers in 1971.

Revisiting Hall's works (much the same way as I have revisited Michael Snow's at the start of this chapter) further exemplifies the utility of Hall's conceptual concerns in relation to my own research. Certainly, including 'This is a Television Receiver' in chapter 4 of this thesis was a useful citation to make regarding the distortive, reductive edits that confront the viewer with the objective qualities of the screen and habitual viewing regimes. 'TV Interruptions', however, further demonstrates similarities in the conceptual aims of Hall's practice and my own, and the varied experimental approaches adopted to encourage criticality towards habitual screen viewership.

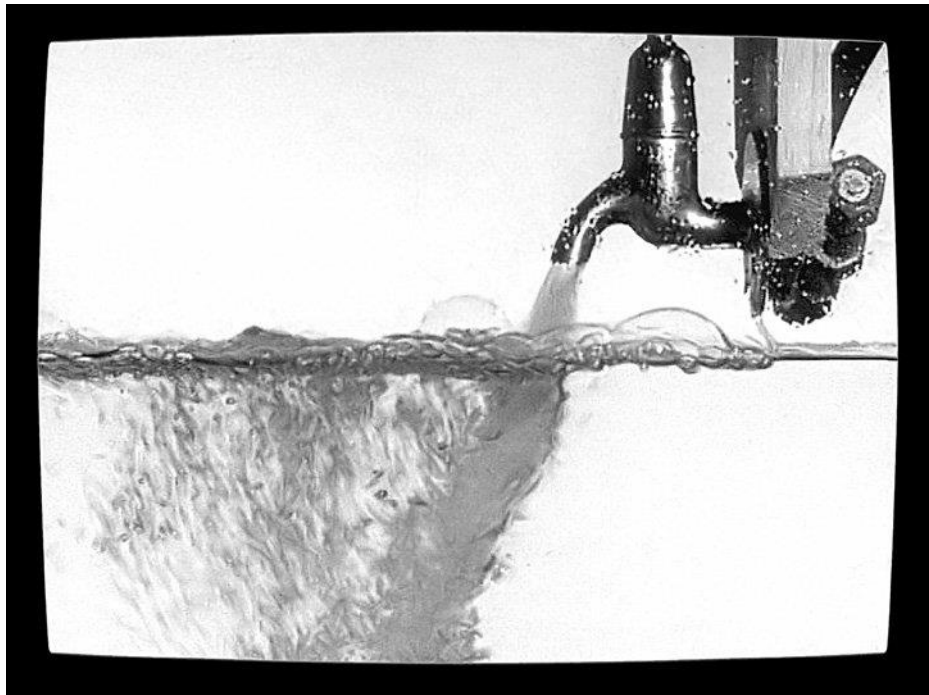


Fig. 107: David Hall, 'Tap Piece' (1971), 16mm film still, duration: 3 minutes, 31 seconds



Fig. 108: David Hall, 'TV Interruptions' (7 TV Pieces): Installation Version' (1971/2006),

7 channel video installation, duration: 22 mins

Screen sculptures

Returning once more to Nam June Paik's works, another common aspect involves generating sites in which aspects of the natural world overlap with developing technology. Paik's use of television sets as a primary sculptural component in expansive installations to meet such aims would become a signature aspect of his body of work. Again, this sense of an interplay of an encroaching synthesis between the natural world and digital technology comes to the forefront, as another of the prominent works in Paik's Tate Modern retrospective, entitled 'TV Garden' (1974) (Fig. 109) features a large scale installation with a series of television sets embedded amongst live plants. This arrangement of Paik's television sets imply a sense of an organic technology, generating new possibilities for the images located on screen in the installation. For Margot Lovejoy, these images "seem to be exotic electronic flowers exuding image-processed abstract forms as a new kind of bio-video language" (Lovejoy, 2004 : 133).



Fig. 109: Nam June Paik, 'TV Garden' (1974) installation view, live plants, cathode-ray tube televisions and video, colour, sound, installation dimensions variable Tate Modern 2019.,
photo: Andrew Dunkley

Many of Paik's other experiments with television sets involved subverting typical spatial engagements with these displays. These include works such as 'Rembrandt Automatic (Rembrandt TV)' (1963) which features a damaged television set presented face-down, exposing the typically concealed rear panel of the object. Another work, 'TV Chair' (1968) (Fig. 110), features a television embedded within a chair's seat. Such an arrangement denies the viewer access to a typical engagement (or indeed, any engagement from the seated position) with screen-based image, instead positioning the viewer towards a criticality with their screen viewing habits.

These works again form part of Paik's proposition that digital technologies would pervade the everyday existence, reaching a synthesis with other rudimentary objects. This assertion aligns with the viewer criticality engendered in outcomes presented throughout this research such as 'Lean experiment' (2015) (Fig. 24) and 'Corridor' (Figs. 30 – 34), wherein a critical relationship with the viewing screen develops as viewers occupy an alternative, transgressive position to the habitual, frontal encounter.



Fig. 110: Nam June Paik, 'TV Chair' (1968) video installation, 83.8 × 43.2 × 38.1 cm, ©

Nam June Paik Estate

Electronic superhighway

This sense of a meeting point between developing technology and aspects of the everyday is a consistent theme in Paik's body of work. In 1974, Paik coined the term 'Electronic Superhighway' as a means of framing his prediction that continual electronic technological developments would generate a de-centralised, global system for information exchange. For Paik, such a system would interlink society, and embody the fabric of the everyday, as well encompassing aspects of the past and the future. Richard Kurin elaborates upon this, stating that Paik envisaged that the "means of communication – the electronic superhighway – would define human society and provide people with the stimulation and sense of identity they once left home to discover in the larger world" (Kurin, 2013: 99).

A work that demonstrates this notion (although not present in Paik's retrospective exhibition at Tate Modern), is 'Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii' (1995) (Fig. 111). A permanent installation at The Smithsonian American Art Museum, the work features a mass assemblage of television video screens structured upon a steel and wooden structure, as well as a series of multi-coloured neon tubing in order to create a geographical image of the United States of America, with companion works featuring similar structures comprising Alaska and Hawaii installed in tandem. These television screens feature imagery synonymous with the U.S states that they geographically represent, generating a cacophony of juxtaposing cultural and historical references.



Fig. 111: Nam June Paik, 'Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii'
(1995), installation view

Obsolescence

One interesting aspect of 'Electronic Superhighway' is that there are notable issues regarding conservation of the screen technology used as part of the installation. The screens present are steadily degenerating, a consequence of the piece's constant, twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week operation. Kurin reinforces this notion, stating that "the video screens depend upon cathode-ray-tube technology, but such tubes are now obsolete and a rarity. As they reach the end of their lifespan, the overall piece will start going dark and eventually die" (Kurin, 2013: 100). Here lies a problematic dimension of the work, and an issue not necessarily with the pieces concept, but instead the hardware available to the artist at the time of its creation: 'Electronic Superhighway' will eventually cease to function, as a result of the degradation of the technology employed to create it. Certainly, it appears there was some degree of anticipation that this degradation might occur over time from Paik's perspective, given the fact that the artist himself had a history of experimenting with the vulnerabilities and malleability of the screening technology. Acknowledging this trend towards obsolescence in the technology in his works was an integral part of Paik's oeuvre.

Degenerating hardware is a topic of some concern with regards to art conservation practices on a larger scale, with Gary Hill's multi-cathode television set work, 'Cinema and a Hard place' (1991), as the primary subject of discussion in Pip Laurenson's 'Developing Strategies for the Conservation of Installations Incorporating Time-Based Media: Gary Hill's Between Cinema and a Hard Place', itself outlining the encroaching obsolescence and deterioration of display devices employed to generate such moving image artworks.

This notion of an encroaching obsolescence of modes of moving image display is further critically examined in David Hall's '1001 TV Sets (End Piece)' (1972-2012) (Fig. 112), featuring a mass installation featuring 1001 cathode ray tube TV sets, each set to coincide with the final analogue television signals in the UK. The featured televisions, each tuned to random analogue stations, transitioned from their respective representations to white noise as their broadcasting signals were switched off from London's Crystal Palace across the exhibition's duration. What Hall's work presents is a multiscreen mausoleum of sorts – marking the departure point for the various analogue technologies that are lost as part of the continual development of moving image technologies.



Fig. 112: David Hall, '1001 TV Sets (End Piece)' (1972-2012), video installation

Multiscreen

Many other practices in the late 20th century similarly employ the multiscreen installation to different conceptual ends, such as Bruce Nauman's 'Violent Incident' (Fig. 113), featuring twelve screened images of performers engaged in verbal and physical altercations, effectively generating a wall of aggressive tension for the viewer. Nauman states in an interview with Joan Simon that "the images are aggressive, the characters are physically aggressive, the language is abusive. The scripting, having the characters act out these roles and the repetition all build on that aggressive tension" (Nauman quoted in Simon, 1988: 148). The work represents Nauman's interest in exploring the capacity for human cruelty, and what effect displaying such confrontations might elicit within the viewer.

Moreover, the multiscreen installation is still favoured by many contemporary visual art practitioners, including a key work featured in Julian Charrière's 2019 inter-disciplinary exhibition at Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, 'All We Ever Wanted Was Everything and Everywhere', entitled 'The Gods must be Crazy' (2019) (Fig. 114). As with many of the other works present in the show, the 'Gods must be Crazy' concerns itself with exploring the concept of anthropocentric ruins, with each screen displaying residues of human presence on the ocean floor.



Fig. 113: Bruce Nauman, 'Violent Incident' (1986), installation with four video tapes



Fig. 114: Julian Charrière, 'The Gods Must Be Crazy' (2019), video installation

Despite the presence of multiple installed screens in a similar manner to Paik's 'Electronic Superhighway', Nauman and Charrière's works clearly do not share the same concern of pervasive electronic or screening technology synthesising into the everyday. What appears to be more prevalent in both of these examples is that by depicting many juxtaposing screened images, the mass screen installation maximises the amount of visual information on display to the viewer, attempting to explore the intended concept or reach the desired viewer response through this visual oversaturation.

Saturation

The multiscreen encounter, and its capacity to saturate the viewer with imagery, perhaps comes to best represent the sense of the pervasive electronic presence Paik explored throughout his body of work. This sense of over-saturation came to its logical zenith in the final piece encountered in Paik's Tate Modern retrospective, a reproduction of his work, 'Sistine Chapel' (1993) (Fig. 115). The work itself is a mass assemblage of projection technology, featuring masses of video clips and still images of global and pop cultures, with artwork and music overlapping in an overwhelming, all-encompassing intensity. Paik's intention with the work was to present an experiential site in which all borders between the works visual and sonic attributes were entirely lapsed, resulting in an amalgamation of art, commerce, and popular culture. 'Sistine Chapel' presents Paik's vision of a non-hierarchical, multidirectional communication of digital properties that would later resemble the current propensity to habitually interact with digital or screening technology in the everyday.

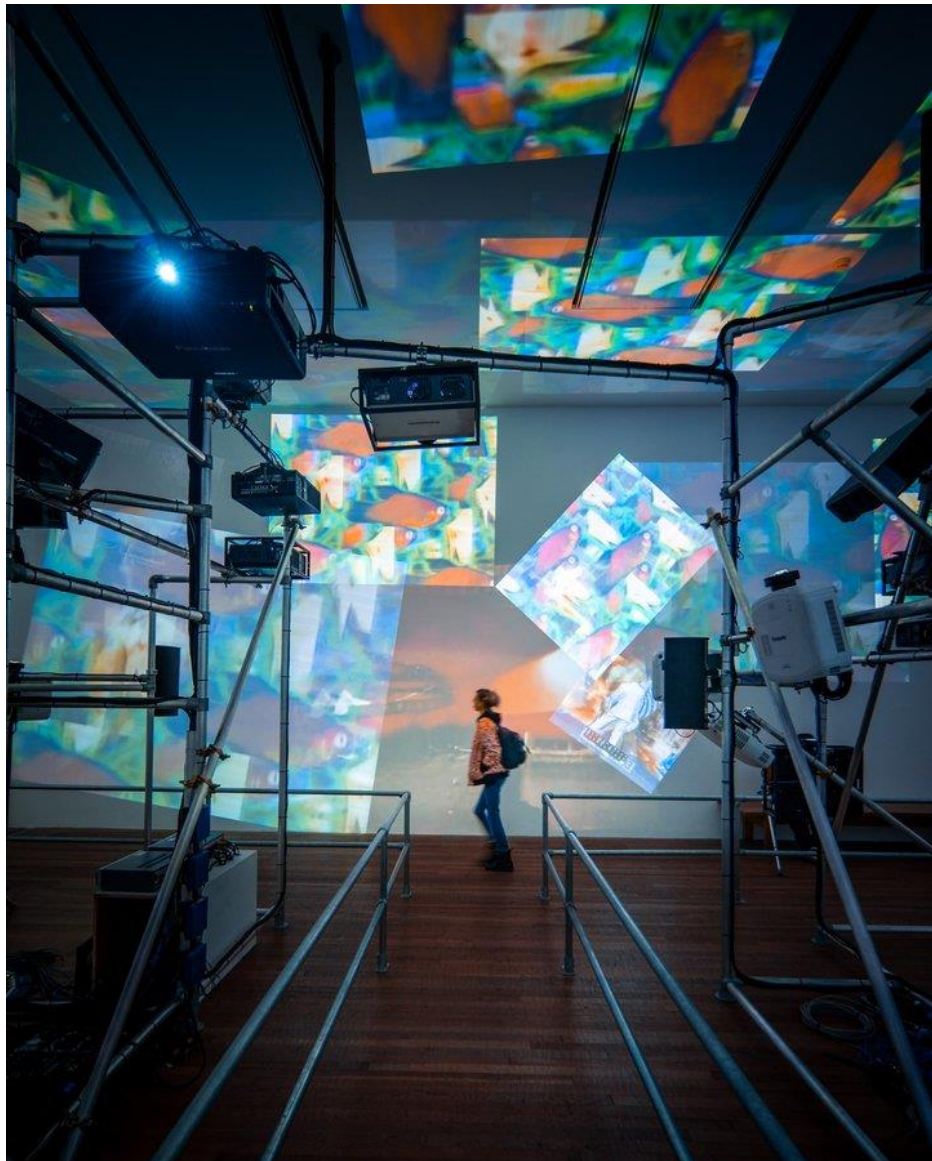


Fig 115: Nam Jun Paik, 'Sistine Chapel' (1993), Tate Modern 2019, photo: Tate

The exploration of such concerns are again commonplace in the work of fellow moving image practitioners. Paik's use of harsh, contrasting electric imagery as means to comment on the overflow of perpetual digital technology, similarly features in Doug Aitken's 'Electric Earth' (1999) (Fig. 116), an all-encompassing, multi-room video installation that embodies the frenetic, subsuming presence of electric devices and the mass-media culture that proliferates through their usage and presence in the everyday. This saturation is also present in the video installation works of Kutluğ Ataman such as 'Mayhem' (2011) (Fig. 117) in which various projection screens present multiple images of water taken from Iguaza Falls, located on between Argentina and Brazil. The gravitational logic of the work is deconstructed as no image in Ataman's work flows down, as per a natural encounter with a waterfall. The sense of a disruptive denaturalisation of the imagery is further intensified as the multitude of images are presented as both suspended in the gallery space and projected on the floor, disorientating the viewer's spatial engagement with the work. The formal elements of the work invite some degree of transgression in this way, allowing the viewer to literally stand on the imagery projected. There is an unsettling spatial ambiguity at work in 'Mayhem', driven largely by these disruptive, discordant visual and spatial elements. Ataman's piece is therefore not dissimilar to previously discussed examples of my own practical outcomes that feature non-natural water flow, such as 'sky waterfall' (2014), 'waterfall 3' (2014), 'Fake Horizon' (2015), or 'wave slip' (2015). In short, multiscreen-based visual saturation frequently occurs in contemporary moving image practices, in a variety of technical formats, and to a variety of different conceptual ends.



Fig. 116: Doug Aitken, 'Electric Earth' (1999), at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA
September 10, 2016 – January 15, 2017, courtesy of The Museum of Contemporary Art,
Los Angeles, photo: Joshua White

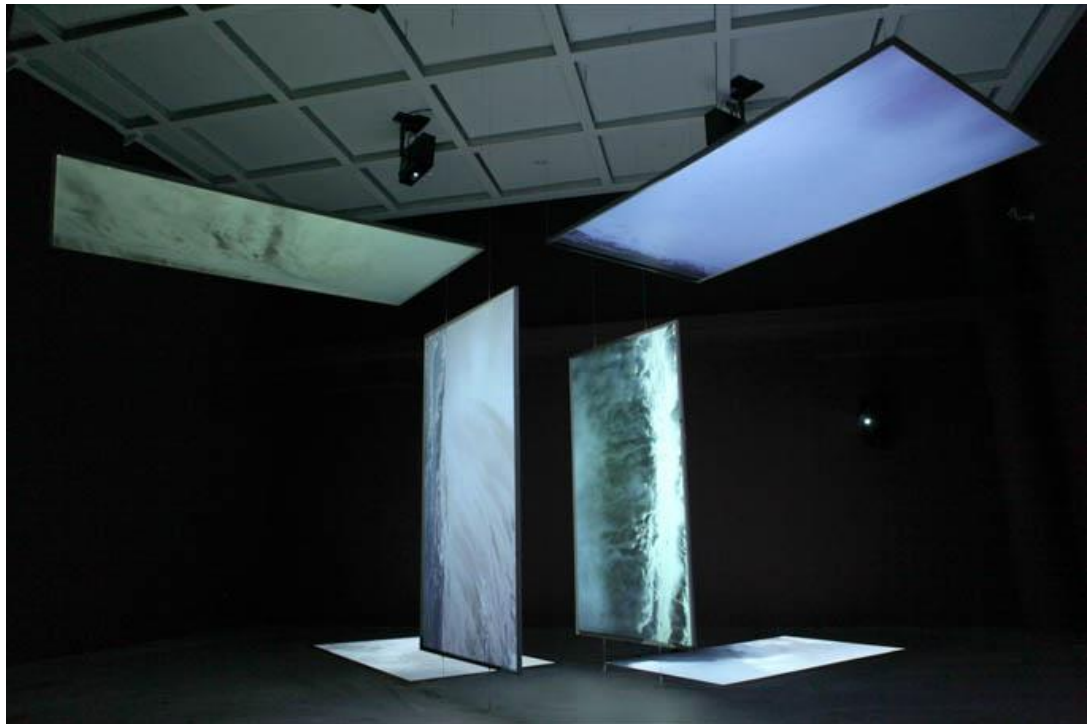


Fig. 117: Kutluğ Ataman, 'Mayhem' (2011), video installation

In regard to relating this sense of oversaturated multi-screen works alongside my own research outcomes, experimentation with such installations requires careful consideration, largely regarding the potential conflict of interest with increasing viewers' exposure to imagery or content, and the research's aim for a critical relationship with the viewing screen itself. The range and concentration of the technological apparatus present in works such as 'Sistine Chapel', 'Electric Earth', or 'Mayhem', relate to multiscreen works presented through this thesis, though perhaps none more than my 'Untitled research exhibition' (Figs 13 and 14). This research exhibition's aim was to establish a strong sense of *mise-en-scène* in the first floor of the gallery space and subtract from this notion as the viewer moved upstairs to the second floor of the exhibition, effectively presenting a skeleton of 'empty' counterpoint works. This subtraction allowed the exhibition to steer the viewer towards critical appraisal of the viewing screen's objecthood in the exhibition, and transgress the typical, habitual spatial conditions within which viewing screens are engaged with. It is this key subtraction applied in the multi-screen installation, its associated over-saturated use of imagery, and subsequent criticality provoked in the viewer as a result, that outlines the key differences in my own research's approach to the various artists featured in this section.

Relation

The previous subsection has utilised Paik's visionary practice to present an interconnected picture of artists attempting to challenge the burgeoning development of screening technologies in the latter half of the 20th century. Paik's works provide many significant points of contextual reference for this research project. Most prominent in these similarities is Paik's examination of the effects of mass proliferation of screen-based digital

media and its subsequent synthesis into the everyday. Naturally, this concept closely resembles the key aim of this research project: to explore the habitual use and increasing invisibility of the viewing screen, with a view to promote viewer-screen criticality over engagement with screened content. Moreover, Paik's experimental and iterative approach to work-making and studio practice also draws certain degrees of symmetry with my own research methodology. Aspects such as the use of television sets in a sculptural capacity or the multiscreen as site for critical commentary or reflection in the viewer also relate to my own research.

Despite acknowledging such related concepts and approaches to work-making, there are still key limitations when cross-examining the artists featured in this subsection in relation to this research project. As indicated previously, such limitations involve the nature of the screening technology employed in Paik's work versus my own research. Admittedly, Paik, in many ways, predicted the current state of mass- proliferated information, digital, and screening technology used by the public in the contemporary everyday. This prediction ultimately involved accepting (or indeed drawing attention to), the highly changeable nature of the technology employed to generate these works, as demonstrated in the many experiments with increasingly redundant analogue screening apparatus.

Certainly, much like Paik's works, my own research outcomes, in the fullness of time, will fall foul to the same issue of future technological developments in this field of study, for instance, the previously mentioned distance drawn between virtual reality technologies and this research (page 81). What this research does present however, is a unique contribution to knowledge in the form of artworks and unique conceptual frameworks, framed by the current technological climate. My research concerns itself with modern day

proliferation of screen-based digital media and its increasing invisibility in order to promote viewer-screen criticality over content engagement. By incorporating suitable modes of modern digital screening technology to interrogate these areas, as opposed to analogue apparatus, the research can more effectively comment on contemporary viewer/screen relations.

Bruce Nauman

Having already featured in the previous subsection, Bruce Nauman proves to be a particularly incisive reference, given the wide range of mediums that the artist has experimented with. Nauman's work 'Green light Corridor' (1971) (Fig. 35), featured in chapter 3 of this thesis is but one of many experiments with restrictive corridor spaces in the artist's body of work. Such works are useful to cite in relation to my own research, particularly regarding concepts of space, and works that involved mediating, or promoting a critical mobility in the viewer, as outlined in chapter 3: Screen and Mobility. A similar corridor structure is present in Nauman's work, 'Live-Taped Video Corridor', (1970) (Fig. 118) featuring two stacked television monitors situated at the end of the fabricated corridor space which comprises the work. The top monitor displays a live feed of the work's viewer advancing down the corridor, the bottom television displays pre-filmed footage of the corridor, shot from the same angle, but conspicuously empty. The resulting encounter is decidedly uncanny for the viewing subject as they are censored from the lower monitor's unsettling footage. Kate Mondloch expands upon this sensation, stating that "spectators assume that the feedback on both of the artwork's monitor displays real-time images of the corridor and should therefore confirm their presence within the space" (Mondloch, 2010: 31). Instead, the empty corridor imagery

upsets this convention, and the viewer experiences “a disarming sense of loss of self in the face of their screen based annihilation” (Mondloch, 2010: 30).

There is a triangulation of concepts here in Nauman’s work, the close containment of the corridor space, the displayed footage – both ‘full’ and ‘empty’ – and of course, the viewer’s encounter with these aspects of the installation. The work therefore consciously uncouples the viewer from any sense of expectancy in relation to the screens present in ‘Live-taped Video Corridor’ by both displaying and censoring their presence in the featured live-feed of the installation space. Imposing viewer self-criticality by mediating screen-based imagery, and the site within which this imagery is encountered, resembles my own works presented in chapter 3: Screen and Mobility, and their aim to emancipate the viewer from embedded viewing screen behaviours through various modes of self-led mobility.



Fig 118: Bruce Nauman, 'Live-Taped Video Corridor' (1970), video installation

Spatiality

Nauman's spatial concerns extend to performance works such as 'Wall/Floor Positions' (1968) (Fig. 119) which displays a self-portrait of his own shifting body "scaled down from life-size to the dimensions of the screen that contains his contortions and motions" to explore the spatial confines of the frame of the video image, ultimately allowing "this mediated presence of the figure (to express) new ways of being" (Lewallen, 2007:180). The movement that Nauman presents in the work precisely outlines the confines and dimensions of the viewing screen that the work is presented upon, as well as locates the position of the camera in a "contrary inversion of the compositional techniques of the painter, photographer, and cinematographer" (Lewallen, 2007: 182), achieving these aspects without the use of editing techniques. Alluding to the formal constraints present in the work, both on and off screen imposes a certain sense of critical awareness in the viewer as they watch 'Wall/Floor Positions'. Furthermore, as this is achieved through performative sequences – something only briefly mentioned in relation to this research project previously – the work becomes another useful point of reference.



Fig. 119: Bruce Nauman, 'Wall / Floor Positions' (1968), video still

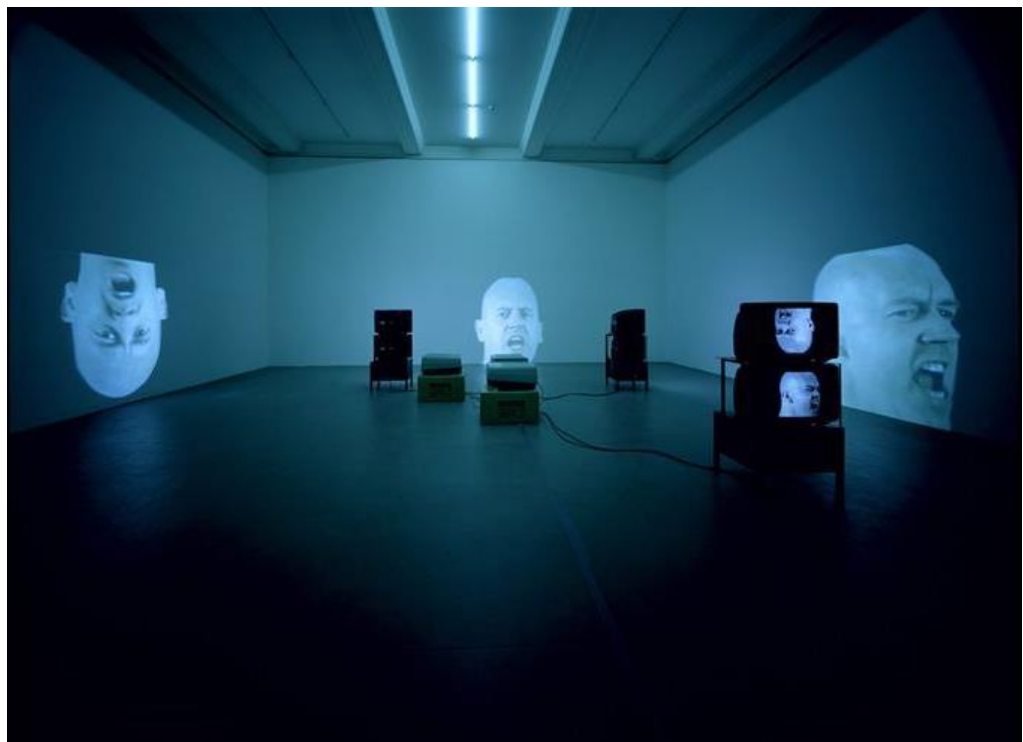


Fig. 120: Bruce Nauman, 'Anthro/Socio' (1992), video installation

There are other works in Nauman's oeuvre that extend this sense of performativity onto the viewer. Nauman's work 'Anthro/Socio' (1992) (Fig. 120) implicates the viewer as both passive participant and onlooker, as "the visible equipment stands in for props" and they are "assigned the role of protagonists" (Martin, 2006: 70). Absurd images of the same cropped, dislocated, and inverted human head (portrayed here by performance artist Rinde Eckert) call out to the viewer with various conflicting requests, occupying differing scales and sustained by various technological devices. The result is an unrelenting engagement with the viewer, who "must spatially surrender to the enervating acoustic presence of the words, and the powerful media images" (Martin, 2006: 70) resulting in the viewer being "powerless to follow the requests" ultimately unable to "defend themselves against the urgency of the images and words" (Ibid.).

These examples of Nauman's works promote viewer interaction with various spatial concepts (and, indeed constraints) by juxtaposing fabricated structures and assemblages of screening technology with one another. This relational quality of the works provides viewers with critical insight born from experiential encounters with the works screened content, and conditions in which they are being viewed. This ultimately results in Nauman encouraging critical reflectivity in the viewer, examining their own habitual engagement (whether it be spatial, such as 'Anthro/socio', or ethical, as per the case of 'Violent Incident') with screen-based media. One cannot help but reiterate similarities in this approach to the critical reflection via emancipatory obliquity present in my own research outcomes featured in chapter 3 of this thesis: Screen and Mobility.

Neon

Nauman's neon sculptures offer some contrasting points for consideration alongside the works and concepts explored in chapter 5 of this thesis: The Phenomenological Screen. One the many examples of his text based sculptures, 'VIOLINS VIOLENCE SILENCE' (1981-2) (Fig. 121), features two iterations of each word, with one written left to right, and another written right to left. The words 'VIOLINS' and 'VIOLENCE' interlace one another in a loose triangular shape, where 'SILENCE' overlaps itself at the foot of the work. This arrangement is further emphasised as the work cycles through it various stages of illumination – singular words lit first in sequence, with a final, full illumination of the overlapping words at the work's culminative stage.

Naturally, each word presented in the work evokes specific semantic associations, and their infringement upon one another generates a discordant scene. Joseph D. Ketner II states that "ekphrastic sound poem in visual form that speaks of the extremes of music and silence, creativity and violence" and that 'the word violin conjures up a pure musical sound that is squelched by violence and obliterated by the succeeding silence" (Ketner, Kraynak and Volk, 2006: 27). What establishes itself in 'VIOLINS VIOLENCE SILENCE' is that the work's primary reading is intrinsically linked to the interplay of these words, and the form and material employed to sustain them offers a facilitatory position in support of this text.



Fig. 121: Bruce Nauman, 'VIOLINS VIOLENCE SILENCE' (1981–2), neon tubing with clear glass tubing suspension frame, © ARS, NY and DACS, London 2020

At this stage, reintroducing previously featured artists and their artworks in chapter 5: The Phenomenological Screen, such as Dan Flavin's 'Untitled (for Frederika and Ian) 3' (Fig. 84) or Antony Gormley's 'Breathing Room II' (Fig. 90) is useful. Nauman's work superficially deploys similar materials, that is, light-giving tubing to generate his neon works. But Nauman's text-based sculptures present a perhaps obvious, but nonetheless crucial concept – the arrival of often conflicting connotative association in the viewer. Nauman's works concern themselves with deploying language to disrupt embedded understandings of written text, a sentiment echoed by Peter Schjeldahl, stating that Nauman, "unlike many artists who toy with language...has a poet's ear" (Schjeldahl, 1993: 107). This is evidently a drastically different approach to the visible, phenomenological state present in Flavin's work, or the spatial markers present in Gormley's installation.

Interesting comparisons can be drawn here between Nauman's use of neon text, and my own practical research outcomes featured in chapter 5: The Phenomenological screen. Upon initial consideration, Nauman's works resemble aspects of my own research outcomes that explore the concept of the 'Screen as Emitter', as explored in works presented in 'Untitled Research Exhibition', or the 'Nimbus I-III' triptych. To reiterate, these works seek to establish the viewer critically towards the typically hidden light of the viewing screen. These research outcomes expose this light in a manner of different fashions, though most commonly by diffusing the light from the screen's aperture onto a nearby exhibition surface, such as the wall or floor. Such arrangements resemble aspects of Flavin's light-based works, and their more abstract presentation of fluorescent light, albeit a key distinction: the light displayed in my own works is 'charged' with its respective representations on screen, retaining some rudimentary characteristics of the video it emerges from. Such aspects mark a clear difference in the conceptual approach of my

own work and Nauman's textual concerns.

It does bear some consideration that Nauman's works closely resemble neon signage as presented in an everyday urban environment. Nauman's work subverts expectations of such familiar signage, encouraging the work's viewer to critically examine their relationship to language. Perhaps then, at some point, Nauman's critical model for neon signage in the contemporary urban context will translate to that of the large, digital screen technologies that render such neon signage increasingly obsolete.

Anthony McCall

Anthony McCall is another key practitioner to consider with regards to the concepts explored in chapter 5 of this thesis: The Phenomenological Screen. McCall's practice presents a particularly useful case study when mapping a development from his early examples of moving image practices to his prominent light-based sculptural works. In an Interview with Scott MacDonald, McCall states that his early career video works were "influenced by Peter Gidal's early writing" and therefore closely resemble Structural film's propensity to place "stress on the idea of process and on the implications of the medium itself" (McCall quoted in MacDonald, 1992: 160). One such example of McCall's early video works, 'Landscape for Fire' (1972) (Fig. 122), features carefully choreographed performance wherein figures clad in white ignite a series of fires in a rural landscape. McCall takes care to strenuously detail the processes of both the filmmaking, and the fire-lighting performances themselves. In this way, the film shares some of the anti-illusionist aspects of Gidal's filmic approach as outlined at the start of this chapter.



Fig. 122: Anthony McCall, 'Landscape for Fire II' (1972), 16mm film still

It is in McCall's solid light films, however, that key symmetry appears alongside my own research, particularly the notion of the screen-as-emitter as outlined in chapter 5 of this thesis. 'Line Describing a Cone' (1973) (Fig. 123), McCall's first solid light film, features a projected point of light on a screen located across a dark, hazy viewing space. This point gains motion, forming a circle, on the screen, and simultaneously generating a luminous cone shape from the projector's aperture.

Nicky Hamlyn provides some helpful insight on McCall's work in his text *Film Art Phenomena* by drawing key parallels with the key tenets of Expanded Cinema, stating that "Expanded Cinema is characterised by a concern with the nature of the projection (as event: the space and the audience's placement within it, the project, light beam and image" (Hamlyn, 2003: 43). Indeed, 'Line Describing a Cone' engages with film's principal components, light and time. Discussing the work (and several other variations of what would later be categorised as his aforementioned solid light series of films), McCall states that the work "deals with the projected light beam itself, rather than treating the light beam as a mere carrier of coded information, which is decoded when it strikes a flat surface" (McCall quoted in Hatfield and Littman, 2006: 61). The resulting effect of the work is viewer engagement with the apparatus that sustains the cone form, in the shape of the projector, but also a critical appraisal of the light that would otherwise covertly generate moving image. McCall's works render this projected light visible, to the extent that it gains a sense of tangibility, thereby permitting the viewer to interact with it directly. Hamlyn echoes this notion, stating that "'Line describing a Cone' aims to change the spectator's relationship to the image, not just conceptually, but also physically" (Ibid.).

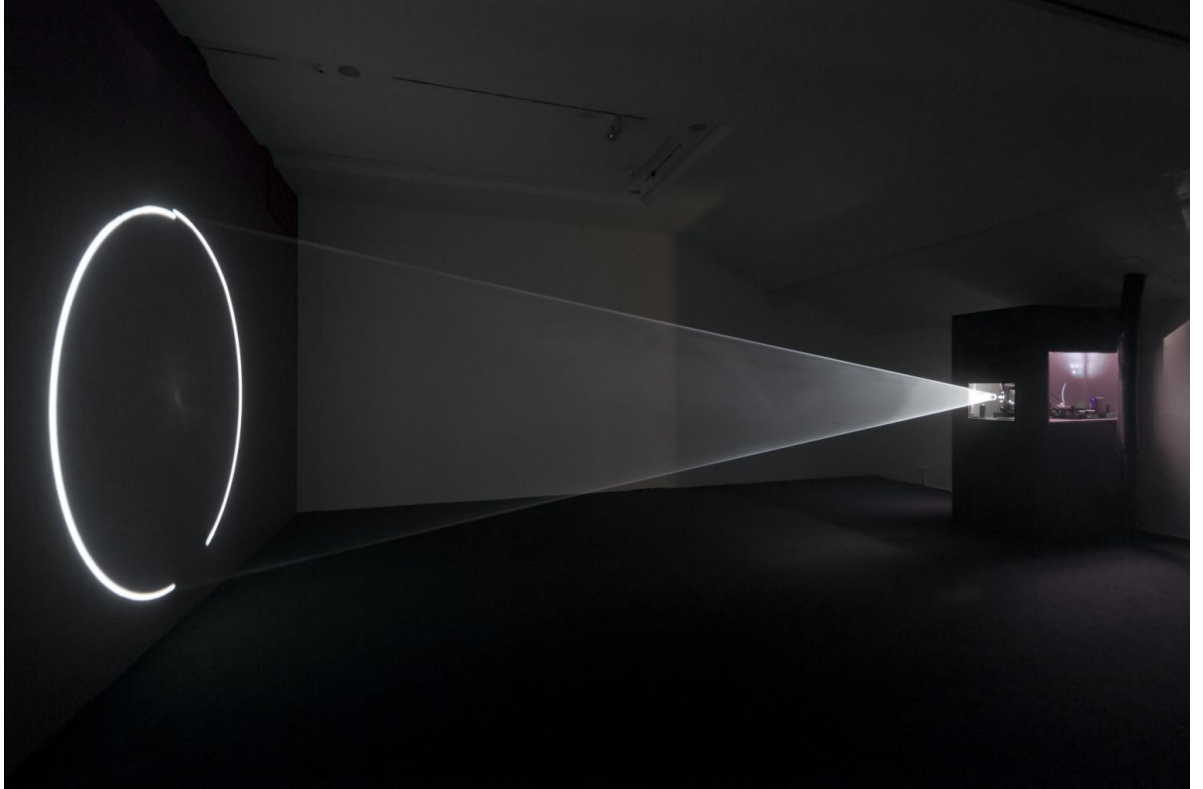


Fig. 123: Anthony McCall, 'Line Describing a Cone' (1973), 16mm Projection, duration: 30 min projection: 3000 × 4000 mm, overall display dimensions variable

Exploring this dimension of physicality with video artworks and their light is reminiscent of the practice of Nan Hoover's, who, like McCall, was motivated by the fundamental qualities of video imagery – the aspects of light and space – that generate an “energetically vital surface that is continually changing” (Martin, 2006: 58). Hoover's video and installation works facilitate the interaction of human body and phenomena of light, movement, and space, with works such as ‘Impressions’ (Fig. 124), depicting a human hand drawing a line of light across the surface of the screen, a gesture not unlike the stroke of a paintbrush across the surface of a canvas. Hoover would later generate relational light-based installation works such as “Movement from Either Direction” (1995) (Fig. 125) in which the viewer's body and mobility contribute to the work's visual parameters in the form of cast silhouettes and shadows.



Fig 124: Nan Hoover, 'Impressions' (1978), video still, duration: 9:45 min

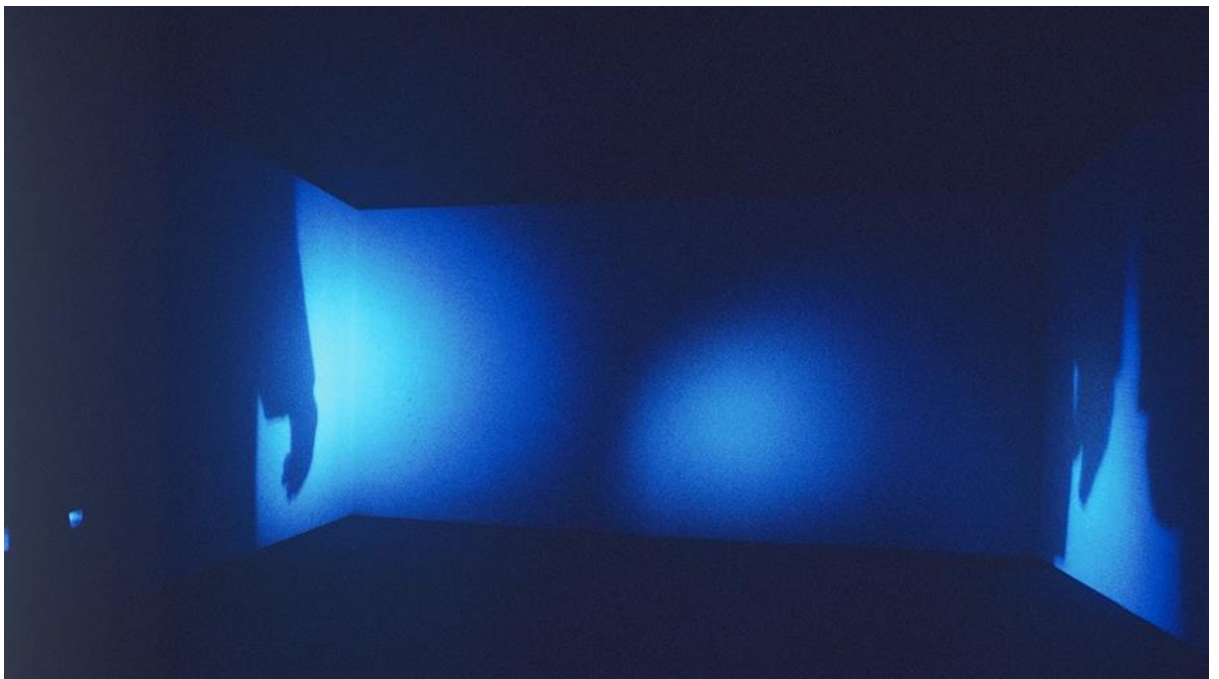


Fig 125: Nan Hoover, 'Movement from Either Direction' (1995), video installation

Relation

McCall and Hoover's light-based works are reminiscent of key concepts established in my own research outcomes. Firstly, the way in which McCall's practice promotes a critical reading of the phenomenological, as well as formal aspects of experiencing moving image. McCall's open discussion regarding the influence of Structural theorists and practice upon his works in the 1970s results in a rigorous, minimal approach to presenting moving image, with no conventional narrative aspects presented in works such as 'Line Describing a Cone'. McCall instead favours the promotion of the pure, technical, material, and phenomenological qualities that substantiate the projection work, ultimately embedding a sense of criticality with these parameters in the viewer. This sense of the typically disregarded phenomena of the moving image – the light which substantiates its displayed content – gaining critical viewership by the viewer closely relates to the concept of the viewing screen's emitted hidden light as outlined in chapter 5 of this thesis: The Phenomenological Screen. Self-encouraging autonomy in the spatial engagement of the viewer is also a key aspect of McCall's work, providing no advantageous point at which to encounter the work, instead favouring an informal, experiential viewing. Such an approach recalls the notion of 'emancipatory obliquity' as generated in works present in chapter 3 of this thesis: Screen and Mobility.

It occurs to me that despite these similarities in attempting to draw the viewer closer to the technical, material, and phenomenological qualities that sustain moving image, there are crucial elements that contrast with my own research outcomes. Namely, the fact that McCall's work also promotes viewer interaction by presenting the work's typical ephemeral light as tangible, inviting viewers to touch and move within or around it.

Hoover's works further build upon this notion by intrinsically linking viewer's figures to the visual aesthetic of her work, as per 'Movement from either direction'.

My own research has shied away from encouraging a tangible, haptic encounter with the screen itself, or installations that render the screen's emitted light visible. Although admittedly an effective approach in experimental video arts and expanded cinema practices, the haptic engagement is synonymous with habitual use of contemporary screening technology. In the fabric of this project, implying or actively promoting viewers physical touch in relational artworks would run the risk of setting criticality aside in favour of a typical haptic encounter with the viewing screen.

Summary

This chapter has presented a series of case studies into relevant practitioners and literature operating in the fields of video art and expanded cinema, in order to better articulate this research's contribution to knowledge. By presenting such works alongside key concepts from this thesis and its respective body of practice, various important parallels and limitations arise. The reoccurring motif in this chapter's contextual appraisal of expanded cinema and video art practice is the historic transition between analogue and digital moving image practices in the 1960s and 1970s. Locating my own research outcomes and conceptual frameworks alongside the many technological and conceptual developments at this time has provided many helpful points of orientation.

Nicky Hamlyn's *Film Art Phenomena* notes that a critical departure of sorts has occurred in contemporary moving image practices as a result of this transition, a distancing from the

appraisal of formal aspects of film engendered by experimental film-making. For Hamlyn, problems arise as a result of this departure, such as the “conventional cinema space within the white cube” that elides “specificities of the space or the sculptural implications of the projection process” (Hamlyn, 2003: 43-44).

Furthermore, Hamlyn references the many modern moving image practitioners and their tendency to employ technology that “minimises (its) presence”, such as “digital projectors mounted high above the spectator” (Hamlyn, 2003: 44). Indeed, the problem proliferates further as contemporary artists stage works that resemble Structural films and their formal concerns, and use them “to serve a narrative conceit, negating their original purpose” (Ibid.). The final concern that such works present to Hamlyn is a “gulf, both ideological and institutional, between the traditions and practice of experimental film and video, and work by artists who... strictly control the conditions under which their films are screened, in order to safeguard their value as limited edition commodities” (Ibid.).

A.L Rees’s text, *Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film*, similarly presents a sense of the tension between analogue and video mediums, particularly during the late 1960s as practitioners such as David Hall began their experimentation with the video medium. In her contribution to the text ‘Expanded Cinema: Proto – Photo and Post-Photo Cinema’, Jackie Hatfield acknowledges the benefits of this transitory stage in the history of moving image, stating that many artists “gravitated to video from film”, and that the video medium allowed artists to push the “boundaries of moving-image and cinematic spectacle, technological innovation, interactivity and performance” (Hatfield in Rees et Al., 2010: 262). For Hatfield, the developments associated with these practices are manifold, such as the ability to experiment with “the stage-management of time and

space”, the opportunity to generate relational works where “the audience could inhabit the artwork and actively engage with the representation”, or “broadcast into the private space of the viewer” and subsequently “exist beyond the gallery space” (Hatfield in Rees et Al., 2010: 263).

For Hatfield, development in experimental video art forms does not carry with it a sense of regression:

The ways in which artists engage with practice and philosophies of cinema – film, video or digital media – exist beyond any prevailing technocracy, and articulate the discourses and evolving ‘languages’ of the emergent moving-image technologies. They also acknowledge the historical continuities of experimentation with proto- and post-photo cinema. (Hatfield in Rees et Al., 2010: 265-266)

I propose that my own research aligns with Hatfield’s optimistic outlook, and effectively deters Hamlyn’s concerns of a contemporary tendency to circumvent concepts established in 1960s and 1970s moving image practices. I do acknowledge that the research outcomes embrace digital technology and its associated connotations of formal or technical concealment. However, these aspects form part of the research’s primary concern, often employed in acts of subversion, utilising the same familiar technology that has perpetually seeped into the collective consciousness to generate a site for critical reflection in the viewer towards the viewing screen. Lastly, and by virtue of this chapter’s various contextual references, it actively acknowledges the legacy of experimental film-makers that have covered similar concepts and positions its own research findings in accordance to them.

The result of this appraisal are the many practical research outcomes presented throughout this thesis, and their associated conceptual frameworks such as 'The Persistent Image', 'Emancipatory Obliquity' and 'Screen as Emitter'. These concepts and artworks may share characteristics of many of the featured artists and artworks throughout this chapter but pronounce their contribution to knowledge based on specific and unique terms. That is, they are deployed to critically re-appraise the viewer's engagement with screening technology in a climate that proliferates screen-based imagery in the everyday, and its resulting increasing invisibility of the screen's formal qualities.

Having taken the opportunity to situate the practical outcomes and conceptual frameworks alongside the numerous significant references throughout this chapter, attention can now turn to clearly articulating this research's contribution to knowledge.

Conclusion

Having outlined the key thematic areas that comprised this research, attention must now turn to what I believe this research has achieved, or more importantly, discovered as a contribution to new knowledge. Before this stage is reached however, a recap of the findings from each area would be valuable.

Screen Objecthood

Outcomes of this research under the theme of 'Screen Objecthood' theme made their priority an appraisal of the screen's formal qualities, something that is inherently problematic for the contemporaneous screen viewer. The objecthood of the screen is typically overlooked in the everyday: the conventional encounter emphasises looking at the screened image, as opposed to the screen itself. (Mondloch) The result is of this ubiquitous formal presence of the viewing screen is that the screen becomes invisible in the majority of these encounters.

Screen technologies also provoke a wide spectrum of altered inter-personal, social and even biological dimensions. This results in a pervasive 'electronic presence' (Sobchack) that continually redefines the way screen users interact with one another and the world around them. Compounding this issue is the fact that the screen operates as a liminal, pervasive, ambiguous object, with its appearance, motive and function fluctuating as a result of this hybridity (Mondloch).

It is by aligning this research alongside visual arts practices that similarly explore these ambiguities of the screen that one might close the gap between the viewer and the

objecthood of the viewing screen. These include structuralist film practices that expose the screen as a site for illusionary display, as well as an object in its own right (Mondloch). The emphasis of such practices is the promotion of the screen from its primary role of an image facilitator, or vessel, to that of a reflexivity with the image on screen.

These inputs ultimately lead towards the proposition that the viewing screen offers a similar role as the traditional painting frame. By challenging the established concepts of “Erga” and “Parerga” (Kant) this research instead advocated a reciprocity between the depictions within an artwork, and the supporting structures traditionally considered subsidiary. This promotion of the previously relegated screen format aligns with Derrida’s concept of the Parergon, the notion that the screen operates as a liminal entity, neither inside nor outside the work. Aligning the viewing screen with Derrida’s notion of the Parergon resulted in a series of practical works exploring the nature of the screen operating as an ambiguous, paradoxical object that at once mediates, contains, and restricts, amongst other functions. Herein lies the opportunity to promote the viewing screen’s objecthood alongside that which is being depicted within.

One key practice outcome that implemented this notion of Parergon is ‘Inaccessible’, featuring an embossed section of the installed screen acting as a barrier within which the screens displayed content is omitted. This aspect of the work provides a reciprocity between the screened image and the objecthood of the work, aligning with the Parergon, and promoting the viewing screen’s subsidiary position to an integral reciprocal role in the context of the work. This work therefore provokes a critical relationship with the screen’s objecthood in the viewer.

Screen and Mobility

Practice outcomes in the research that incorporated viewer movement in relation to the viewing screen fall under the theme of 'Screen and Mobility'. The mobility engendered in the practice is varied, such as an ambling motion around a series of installed works, as well as more structured movements, as if to propose an optimal position to attain a sense of coherency between disparate screened images. Further to these modes of mobility, the practice also employed kinetic experiments in which the screen's structure gains a perpetual motion. The key term cultivated to describe the mobility in this research is 'emancipatory obliquity', itself a hybridisation of theoretical inputs from Jacques Rancière's model for viewer emancipation, and Francois Jullien's concept of obliqueness.

Rancière's emancipation of the spectator can only occur in a pensive viewer making judgements based on his or her own experience and knowledge, from a "zone of indeterminacy". Viewers therefore exert their own thinking into the visual entity in question, thus serving to emancipate by suspending narrative logic in images for an indeterminate, pensive encounter. Rancière provides the basis for a mode of viewership that might generate new possibilities and connections by differentiating between works that might include a prescribed emancipatory agenda, and those that engender emancipation via self-led viewer critical reflection.

Obliquity or "obliqueness" (Jullien) refers to providing the conditions within which one might gain a critical positioning in relation to something that is instinctual or habitual. This research therefore incentivises an oblique mobile encounter with the viewing screen that resists traditional, habitual frontal viewing conditions. Obliqueness in this sense is both a

literal product of viewer movement, and figurative concept that seeks to destabilise atypical viewing screen encounters.

This term 'emancipatory obliquity' denotes a viewing condition that remains sensitive to the fact that directing a supposed optimal mobility within which to view my research outcomes stultifies the viewer – reinforcing his or her role as a passive recipient in viewing screen encounters. Instead, the work engenders a holistic mobility that allows viewers to reach a critical obliqueness in relation to the viewing screen based on their own personal experience. This is perhaps most effectively cultivated in the research's outcomes that incentivise a transgressive mobility – offering an oblique position that destabilises notions of an authoritative immobility in viewing screen encounters by allowing viewers to engage with the concealed components of a viewing screen encounter.

My installation 'Corridor' is one example of this. This work discloses its representation across four screens along a corridor space; upon reaching the final screen, the viewer's returned movement presents the rear of the installed screens. This position therefore transgresses what is typically concealed in a viewing screen encounter, ultimately steering the viewer towards a critical re-positioning in relation to the screen, in line with the aim of emancipatory obliquity.

Problematic Image

The identification of the 'problematic image' referred to the difficult encountered with distancing viewers' desire for an engagement with what is being displayed on the screen. Feedback has seen the images present in my works deemed too engaging to incentivise a

critical engagement with the formal aspects of the works, echoing the typical viewing encounter of content over form, and thereby detrimental to this research's objectives. The range of theoretical models adopted in my research with regards to image have therefore been critically appraised. These include the *Verfremdungseffekt* (Brecht) that provokes a distanciation in the viewer, deemed unsuitable due to its ostensive socio-political agenda.

A comprehensive appraisal of the problematic use of landscape imagery in this research also occurred here. Landscape is employed to emphasise the artificiality of the screened image and provoke a criticality toward the screen itself. This was achieved in a series of practical models, firstly, the stressed fallibility of the sublime landscape, a product of the unilateral accessibility offered by contemporary screening technologies (Bell). Further to this are visual distortions that complicate compositional aspects of landscape such as depth and perspective by means of stretching, layering and concealment. These distortions were the catalyst for an objective criticality in the viewer, with the screened image rendered emphatically artificial.

As carefully as these triangulated theoretical inputs have been positioned, their execution in practical outcomes still presented problems, with 'Västerås Slip' (2016) as a key example. Throughout the duration of the piece, an image of a dark landscape from a moving vehicle repeats in a loop. In each cycle of the work - dark vacancies manifest between the foreground and background of the composition, bridging these areas.

The potential issue with such an image arises with the subsequent arrival of an implied narrative between each dark vacancy or layer, aligning with the surrealist concept of a

“layered depth” (Finkelstein). In this way, this chapter’s key finding is that outlining a specific route to extracting viewers from their embedded viewing behaviour with regards to screened image is unlikely. Considering this, this research argued for the use of a self-styled ‘persistent image’ as counterpoint to the problematic imagery encountered in previous iterations of my practice.

My work ‘Birds’ is a key site for this notion of the persistent image. Here the depicted figures disappear, presenting an absence to the viewer, only to re-emerge and repeat their trajectory infinitely. The temporal aspect of the work endlessly persists as an independent article outside of the temporal sphere of the viewer. The persistent image in ‘Birds’ provokes a sequence of reactions from its viewer - offering at once an access point via the screen’s image, a skepticism as to the authenticity of this image as it loops in perpetuity, an melancholy that comes with the realisation of the images’ artificiality, and a summative mourning of this absence of an authentic image, steering the encounter toward a reparatory engagement with the screen structure itself.

The Phenomenological Screen

The final major thematic segment of this research is entitled ‘The Phenomenological Screen’. The key position outlined is that a phenomenological study of screen viewership “discloses a notion of an *already there implicit agreement*” (Introna and Ilharco). Certainly, my research has sought to upend this sense of the ‘already agreed’ between the screen and its viewer, via destabilisation of the habitual encounter with the viewing screen as explored in each previous thematic area of this research. However, further consideration of this concept pertained to previously unnoticed practical by-products of the research,

prompting further points for consideration.

It is the notion of the viewings screen's emitted light that featured prominently here: the light cast from the screen's aperture that pools around my works. I propose that this light exists concurrent to all viewing screen interactions, and it must be considered as supplement to the 'already there implicit agreement' between the viewer and the viewing screen. Works, such as 'Nimbus I-III' rendered this emitted light visible by carefully staging the aperture of the work close to nearby surfaces such as walls or floors. By making this emitted light visible, viewers critically position themselves towards a presence that ordinarily lies hidden in viewing screen encounters.

Conceiving the screen as an emitter produced fresh areas of concern however, particularly when considering the exact nature of the emitted light from the screen. The screen emits a light that is charged with its representation, a fact made abundantly clear in works such as 'Nimbus I-III' when the light emitting from the screens flickers and repeats in tandem with the image presented on screen. Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* allowed a firmer grasp of this notion, with his contention that "Our visual field is not neatly cut out of our objective world and is not a fragment with sharp edges like the landscape framed by the window." This locates a tension point between the experience of the visible and the invisible: "We see as far as our hold on things extends", while that which is "not expressly seen by me, still counts in my visual field". Here, a phenomenological approach that includes the peripheral or concealed is emphasised. My research aligns with such a phenomenological appraisal – the practice seeks to challenge the habitual, frontal screen encounter with works that render the screen's hidden emitted light visible, ultimately provoking criticality in relation to this covert phenomenon.

This concept of the screen's hidden light emitted and captured for display to the viewer has culminated in the research exhibited at the THEOREM conference. In my work, 'Nimbus I-III', two of the installed screen iterations presented their hidden light for the viewers consideration. It is, however, the presence of the third, central screen, front facing and reminiscent of the habitual screen encounter, and lacking an appropriate surface to capture and render the screen's emitted light visible, that was key.

In this instance, the hidden light presented in the vertical and horizontal iterations of the installation steered viewers towards its covert operation within the central iteration. In this way, 'Nimbus I-III' provided the viewer with the necessary critical toolset to question this already implicitly agreed upon aspect of screen phenomenology. I propose that it is this critical exposure of a covert light that the viewing screen emits in my works, and a phenomenon that indeed occurs for all screens, that is a crucial finding of this research.

Summary and contribution to knowledge

How do each of these thematic areas match up to this research's overarching aim of provoking a critical re-appraisal and re-alignment of the viewing screen? The purpose of this research was to develop an experimental body of fine art practice that interrogated the nature of contemporary screen viewership, and to promote a critical consideration by the viewer of the structural essence of the screen.

Each of this thesis' chapters have outlined a series of practical outcomes that, to varying extents, succeeded in providing the viewers with a critical toolset, or route with which to approach the typical relationship with the viewing screen in an oblique fashion.

Furthermore, aspects of these chapters and their outcomes have uncovered characteristics of viewing screen interaction that are habitually disregarded or overlooked, appropriating them as key attributes for viewer's consideration.

These works operate as the route towards emancipation from the typical or habitual screen encounter. Viewers' embedded viewing habits or approaches are contested or changed, and an active criticality towards the viewing screen object itself, as well as towards the viewing regimes that comprise the typical screen encounter, is formed. It is through this criticality that a reparation between the viewer and the neglected screen may occur.

I therefore propose that this research contributes new knowledge to the field of the visual arts in both the original critical appraisal, and subsequent realignment of the viewing screen engendered by the research's body of fine art practice. This includes the practical outcomes that have led and developed this research's investigation, their successes and failures, as well as their subsequent exhibition. In addition to the practice itself, it is also the proposal for a series of distinctive or new conceptual frameworks that these works operate within and around that further contributes to new knowledge. Such frameworks include aligning aspects of the screen's objecthood with the concept of the parergon (chapter 2), as well as the concepts of 'Emancipatory Obliquity' (chapter 3), 'The Persistent Image' (chapter 4), and 'Screen as Emitter' (chapter 5) as outlined in the different sections of the thesis.

Table of Illustrations:

Fig. 1: Brian Clarke, 'Summer Solstice Screens' (2017), stained glass screen, 204 x 252 x 405 cm.

Fig. 2: James Quinn, 'waterfall 3' (2014), video

Fig. 3: James Quinn, 'Inaccessible' (2014), video Installation

Fig. 4: Jan van Eyck, 'Ghent Altarpiece (open)' (1432), oil on wood, Saint Bavo Cathedral, Ghent, Belgium.

Fig. 5: Howard Hodgkin, 'Like an Open Book' (1989-1990), painting

Fig. 6: James Quinn, 'sky waterfall' (2014), video installation

Fig. 7: Tim O'Brien, 'Realism' (1996), oil on panel, collection of the Museum of American Illustration of Society of Illustrators, New York

Fig. 8: Babak Golka, 'Untitled' (2011), acrylic sheets, wood, lacquer, 72" x 60" x 4.5"

Fig. 9: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2018), video installation detail 1

Fig. 10: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2018), video installation detail 2

Fig. 11: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2018), video installation detail 3

Fig. 12: Norwich University of the Arts, St Georges Building Project Spaces, floors 1 & 2.

Fig. 13: James Quinn, 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018), exhibition view

Fig. 14: James Quinn, 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018), exhibition view 2

Fig. 15: Film still from The Draughtman's Contract, (1982) directed by Peter Greenaway, British Film Institute Channel 4, by United Artists Classics (USA)

Fig. 16: James Quinn, 'Staggered Horizon' (2015), video installation

Fig. 17: James Quinn, 'Horizon slip 1' (2016), video installation

Fig. 18: James Quinn, 'Horizon slip 1' (2016), video installation, view 2

Fig. 19: James Quinn, 'Horizon slip 2' (2016), video installation

- Fig. 20: James Quinn, 'Horizon slip 2' (2016), video installation, view 2
- Fig. 21: Marcel Duchamp, 'Étant Donnés' (1964-1966), installation
- Fig. 22: James Quinn, 'Cloud Line' (2016), installation concept
- Fig. 23: Penelope Haralambidou, 'Déjà vu: Restaging Resnais's Last Year at Marienbad' (2009), digital architectural mode
- Fig. 24: James Quinn, 'Lean experiment', (2015) video installation
- Fig. 25: Cerith Wyn Evans, 'TIX3', (1994) neon sign
- Fig. 26 and 27: James Quinn, 'Untitled Research Exhibition', (2018) Project space 1 and 2 (Floor 1/Floor 2), installation detail
- Fig. 28: Dereck Kreckler, 'Antidote' (2005), video installation
- Fig. 29: Emma Hart, 'Lost' (2009-2011) video installation
- Fig. 30: James Quinn, 'Corridor' (2018), installation view
- Fig. 31: James Quinn, 'Corridor' (2018), installation view, detail 1
- Fig. 32: James Quinn, 'Corridor' (2018), installation view, detail 2
- Fig. 33: James Quinn, 'Corridor' (2018), installation view, detail 3
- Fig. 34: James Quinn, 'Corridor' (2018), installation view, detail 4
- Fig. 35: Bruce Nauman, 'Green Light Corridor' (1971), installation
- Fig. 36: Dereck Kreckler, 'Littoral' (2014), video installation
- Fig. 37: James Quinn, 'Gamma' (2018), video still
- Fig. 38: Stephen Partridge, 'Monitor' (1975), video installation
- Fig. 39: James Quinn, 'Pines' (2018), installation view, photograph: Jeanette Bolton Martin
- Figs. 40 - 42: James Quinn, 'Pines' (2018), video stills
- Fig. 43: Dan Hays, 'Colorado Snow Effect 5' (2008), oil on canvas, 122 x 162cm
- Fig. 44: Dan Hays, 'Colorado Snow Effect 9' (detail) (2010), oil on canvas

Fig. 45: Martha Rosler, 'Cleaning the Drapes' (1967–72) from the 'House Beautiful:

Bringing the War Home' series, cut-and-pasted printed paper on board.

Fig. 46: Martha Rosler, 'Balloons' (1967-72) from the series 'House Beautiful:

Bringing the War Home', cut-and-pasted printed paper on board.

Fig. 47: James Quinn, 'wave slip' (2015), video installation

Fig. 48: Jan Dibbets, 'Land and Sea Horizon' (2007), photograph

Fig. 49: James Quinn, 'Fake Horizon' (2015), video still

Fig. 50: James Quinn, 'Cliffs Edge' (2016), video still

Fig. 51: James Quinn, 'Sunset Pan' (2016), video still

Fig. 52: James Quinn, 'Pale Layers' (2016), video still

Fig. 53: René Magritte, 'The Human Condition' (1933), oil on canvas, 100cm x 81cm

Fig. 54: Daniel Crooks, 'Train No.10 (onward backwards' (2012), video still

Fig. 55: Rosemary Jackson, Diagram of the Paraxial (1998)

Fig. 56: Dibbets.J, 'Perspective Correction' (1968), photograph

Fig. 57: James Quinn, 'Västerås Slip' (2016), video still

Fig. 58: James Quinn, 'Västerås Slip' (2016), installation view in 'Constellation' group show

Fig. 59: James Quinn, 'Västerås Slip' (2018), Installation view in 'Untitled Research

Exhibition' at Norwich University of the Arts

Fig. 60: Max Ernst, 'Drum of the Infantry of the Celestial Army Represented Abreast in Their Sunday Best Portrayed Frontally' (1920)

Fig. 61: Rene Magritte, The Double Secret (1927) 114 x 162 cm

Fig. 62: Kavanaugh.L, 'May (Segue)' (2014), Paper, graphite, giclée print, 134 x 222 cm

Fig. 63: Rut Blees Luxemburg, 'Cockfosters' (2009) photograph

Fig. 64: Michael James Lewis and James Quinn 'Test 1 documentation' (2017),

video installation detail

- Fig. 65: Michael James Lewis and James Quinn, 'Test 2' (2017), video installation
- Fig. 66: Michael James Lewis and James Quinn, 'Test 3' (2017), video installation
- Fig. 67: Michael James Lewis and James Quinn, 'Test 3' (2017), video still
- Fig. 68: Jeanette Bolton Martin and James Quinn, 'Test A' (2017), installation
- Fig. 69: Jeanette Bolton Martin and James Quinn, 'Test B' (2017), installation
- Fig. 70: Ben Fox and James Quinn 'Shenyang Fold' (2015), video stills
- Fig. 71: David Hall, 'This is a Television Receiver' (1976) video stills
- Fig. 72: David Batchelor 'No.19 Islington' (1999) as part of 'Monochrome Archive' (1997–2015), photograph
- Fig. 73: Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Tri City Drive-in* (1993), photograph
- Fig. 74: Daniel Crooks, 'Phantom Ride' (2016), two channel video installation
- Fig. 75: Steve McQueen, 'Ashes' (2014-15), installation view, photo c: Roberto Marosi
- Fig. 76: Peter Campus, 'Three Transitions' (1973), video still
- Fig. 77: James Quinn, 'Fog' (2016), video still
- Fig. 78: James Quinn, 'Fog' (2016), video installation
- Fig. 79: James Quinn, 'Birds' (2016), video still
- Fig. 80: James Quinn, 'Birds' (2016), video installation
- Fig. 81: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' light detail (horizontal) (2018), video installation
- Fig. 82: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' light detail (vertical) (2018), video installation
- Fig. 83: James Quinn, 'Fog' light detail (2018) video installation
- Fig. 84: Dan Flavin, 'Untitled (for Frederika and Ian) 3' (1987), pink, yellow, and blue fluorescent light, 183 cm long on the diagonal
- Fig. 85: James Quinn, 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018), floor 2 installation detail
- Fig. 86: James Quinn, 'Untitled Research Exhibition' (2018), floor 2 installation detail 2

Fig. 87: James Turrell, 'Breathing Light' (2013), LED light into space, dimensions variable,
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, photo: Florian Holzherr

Fig. 88: James Turrell, 'Raemar Pink White' (1969), Collection of Art and Research,
Las Vegas, photo: Florian Holzherr

Fig. 89: Olafur Eliasson, 'Your colour memory' (2004), installation, Arcadia University Art
Gallery, Glenside, Pennsylvania, Photo: Aaron Igler

Fig. 90: Antony Gormley, 'Breathing Room II' (2010) sculpture, aluminium tube,
25 x 25 mm, phosphor H15 and plastic spigots, 385.9 x 856.9 x 928.1 cm

Fig. 91: Antony Gormley, 'Breathing Room II' (2010) sculpture, aluminium tube,
25 x 25 mm, phosphor H15 and plastic spigots, 385.9 x 856.9 x 928.1 cm

Fig. 92: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2019), video installation detail at Anglia Ruskin Gallery

Fig. 93: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2019), video installation detail at Anglia Ruskin Gallery

Fig. 94: James Quinn, 'Nimbus I-III' (2019), video installation detail at Anglia Ruskin Gallery

Fig. 95: Michael Snow, 'Wavelength' (1967), 16mm film still

Fig. 96: Peter Gidal, 'Clouds' (1969), 16mm film still

Fig. 97: Malcolm Le Grice, 'Berlin Horse' (1975), 16mm film still

Fig. 98: David Parsons, 'Mechanical Ballet' (1975), 16mm film still

Fig. 99: Bill Viola, 'The Reflecting Pool' (1977), video still

Fig. 100: Bill Viola, 'Fire Woman' (2005), video installation

Fig. 101: Bill Viola, 'Tristan's Ascension (The Sound of a Mountain Under a Waterfall)'
(2005), video installation

Fig. 102: Susan Hiller, 'An Entertainment' (1990), video and sound installation

Fig. 103: Douglas Gordon, '24 hour Psycho' (1993), video installation

Fig. 104: Christian Marclay, 'The Clock' (2010), single channel video, duration: 24 hours,
White Cube, photo: Ben Westoby

Fig. 105: Nam June Paik, 'TV Buddha' (1974), installation view, Tate Modern 2019. photo:

Andrew Dunkley

Fig. 106: Nam Jun Paik, 'TV Magnet' (1965), modified black and white television set and magnet, 98.4 × 48.9 × 62.2 cm

Fig. 107: David Hall, 'Tap Piece' (1971), 16mm film still, duration: 3 minutes, 31 seconds

Fig. 108: David Hall 'TV Interruptions' (7 TV Pieces): Installation Version' (1971/2006), 7 channel video installation, duration: 22

Fig. 109: Nam June Paik, 'TV Garden' (1974) installation view, live plants, cathode-ray tube televisions and video, colour, sound, installation dimensions variable Tate Modern 2019., photo: Andrew Dunkley

Fig. 110: Nam June Paik, 'TV Chair' (1968) video installation, 83.8 × 43.2 × 38.1 cm, © Nam June Paik Estate

Fig. 111: Nam June Paik, 'Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii' (1995), installation view

Fig. 112: David Hall, '1001 TV Sets (End Piece)' (1972-2012), video installation

Fig. 113: Bruce Nauman, 'Violent Incident' (1986), installation with four video tapes

Fig. 114: Julian Charrière, 'The Gods Must Be Crazy' (2019), video installation

Fig 115: Nam Jun Paik, 'Sistine Chapel' (1993), Tate Modern 2019, photo: Tate

Fig. 116: Doug Aitken, 'Electric Earth' (1999), at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA September 10, 2016 – January 15, 2017, courtesy of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, photo: Joshua White

Fig. 117: Kutluğ Ataman, 'Mayhem' (2011), video installation

Fig 118: Bruce Nauman, 'Live-Taped Video Corridor' (1970), video installation

Fig. 119: Bruce Nauman, 'Wall / Floor Positions' (1968), video still

Fig. 120: Bruce Nauman, 'Anthro/Socio' (1992), video installation

Fig. 121: Bruce Nauman, 'VIOLINS VIOLENCE SILENCE' (1981–2), neon tubing with clear glass tubing suspension frame, © ARS, NY and DACS, London 2020

Fig. 122: Anthony McCall, 'Landscape for Fire II' (1972), 16mm film still

Fig. 123: Anthony McCall, 'Line Describing a Cone' (1973), 16mm Projection, duration: 30 min projection: 3000 × 4000 mm, overall display dimensions variable

Fig 124: Nan Hoover, 'Impressions' (1978), video still, duration: 9:45 min

Fig 125: Nan Hoover, 'Movement from Either Direction' (1995), video installation

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Appendix

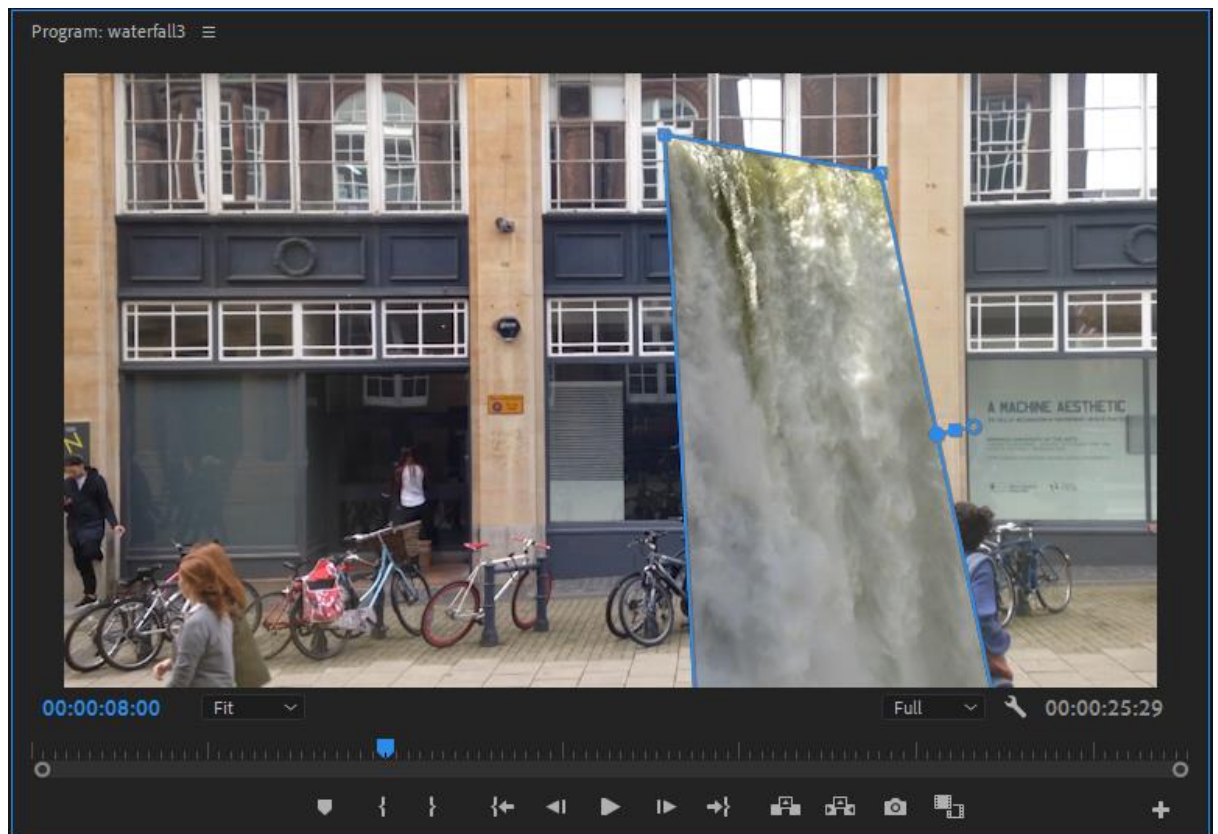
This appendix provides supplementary screenshots of the editing techniques employed to generate key video works located within this thesis. The screenshots are divided into three categories for clarity: 'Frame', which features a frame of the work in question for visual reference, 'Effects', which displays the exact effects employed, and 'Timeline', which details the duration of the work and its effect. The works in this section are labelled as according to the Table of Illustrations and fall under their respective chapter titles.

Chapter 2: Screen Objecthood

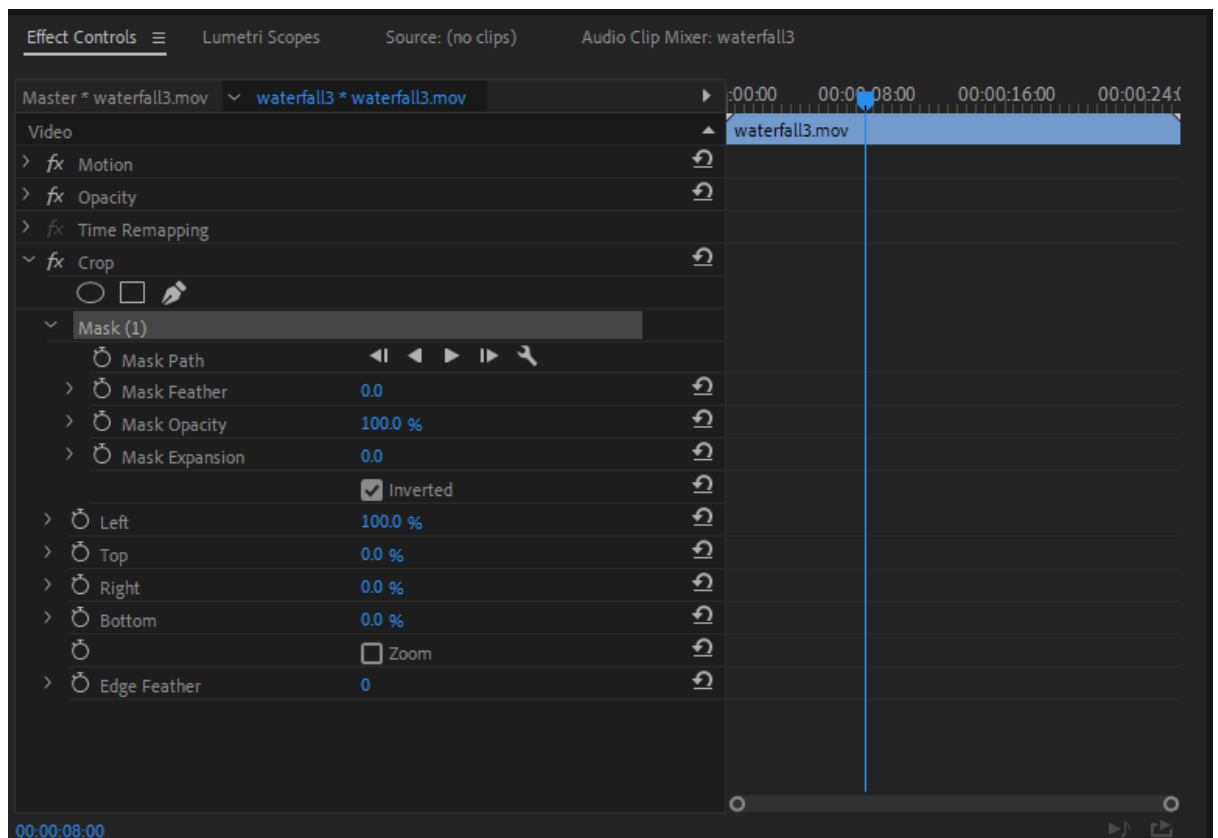
Fig. 2: 'waterfall 3' (2014)

This work involves layering of two separate video clips and inverting and cropping the desired area to create a collage effect in Adobe Premiere Pro. This editing technique applies to the following other works: Fig. 3: 'Inaccessible' (2014), Fig. 6: 'sky waterfall' (2014), and Fig. 49: 'Fake Horizon' (2015).

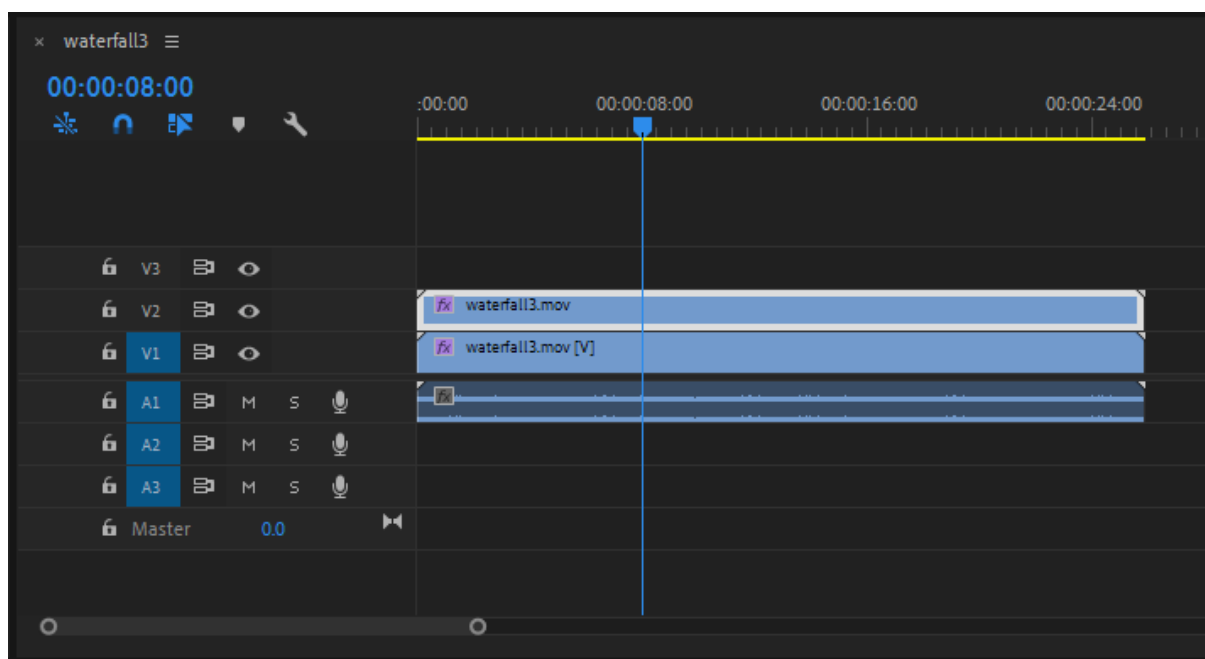
Frame



Effects



Timeline



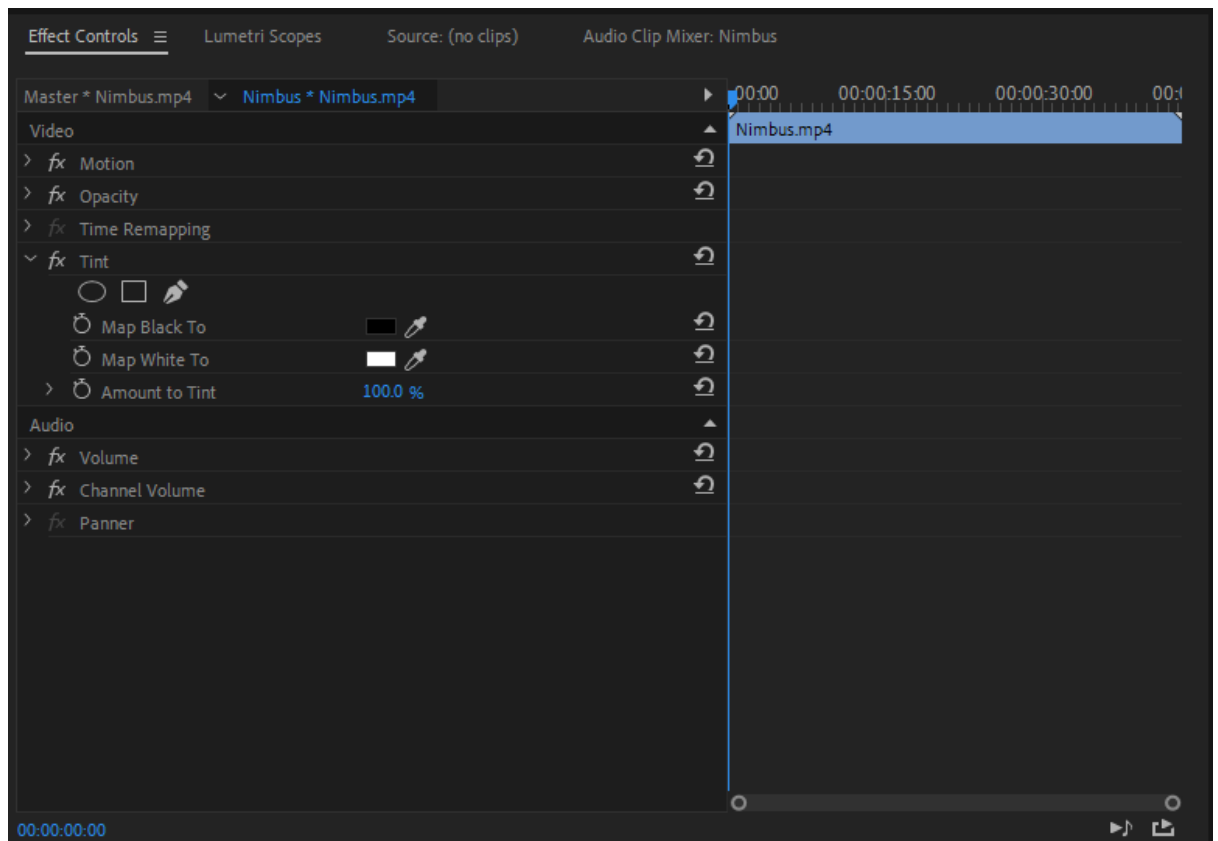
Figs 10 and 11: 'Nimbus I-III' (2018)

This work features a simple recolouring and repeat timeline in Adobe Premiere Pro, set up to provide a perpetual image on loop over the period of the work's installation. This editing technique also applies to Fig. 39: 'Pines' (2018).

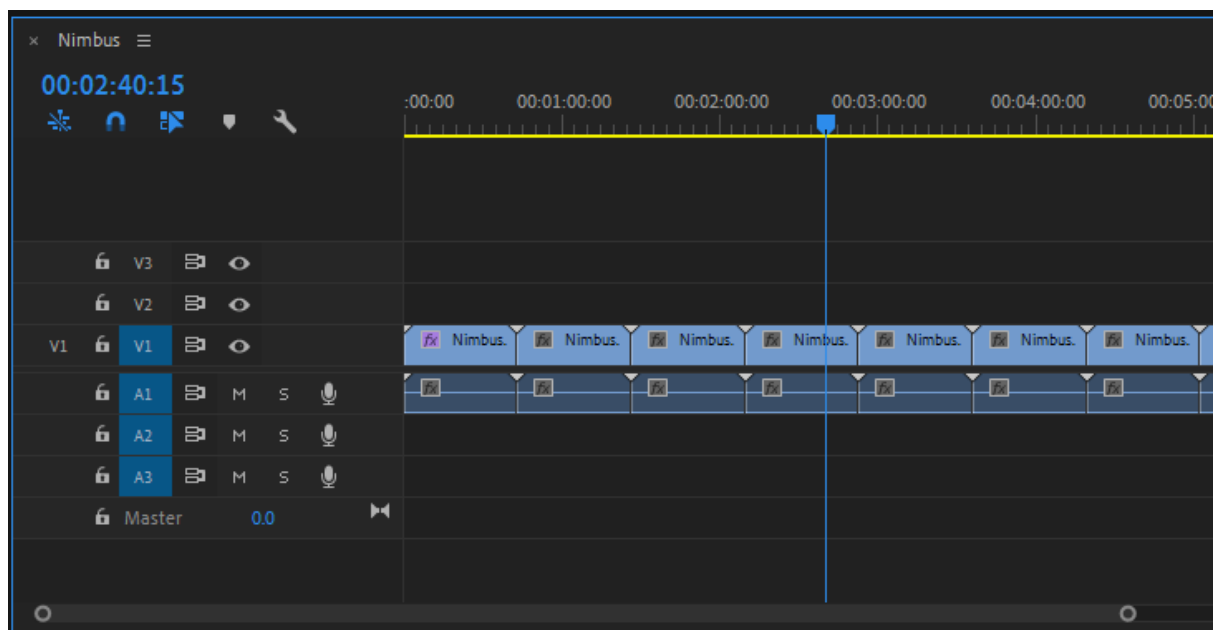
Frame



Effects



Timeline

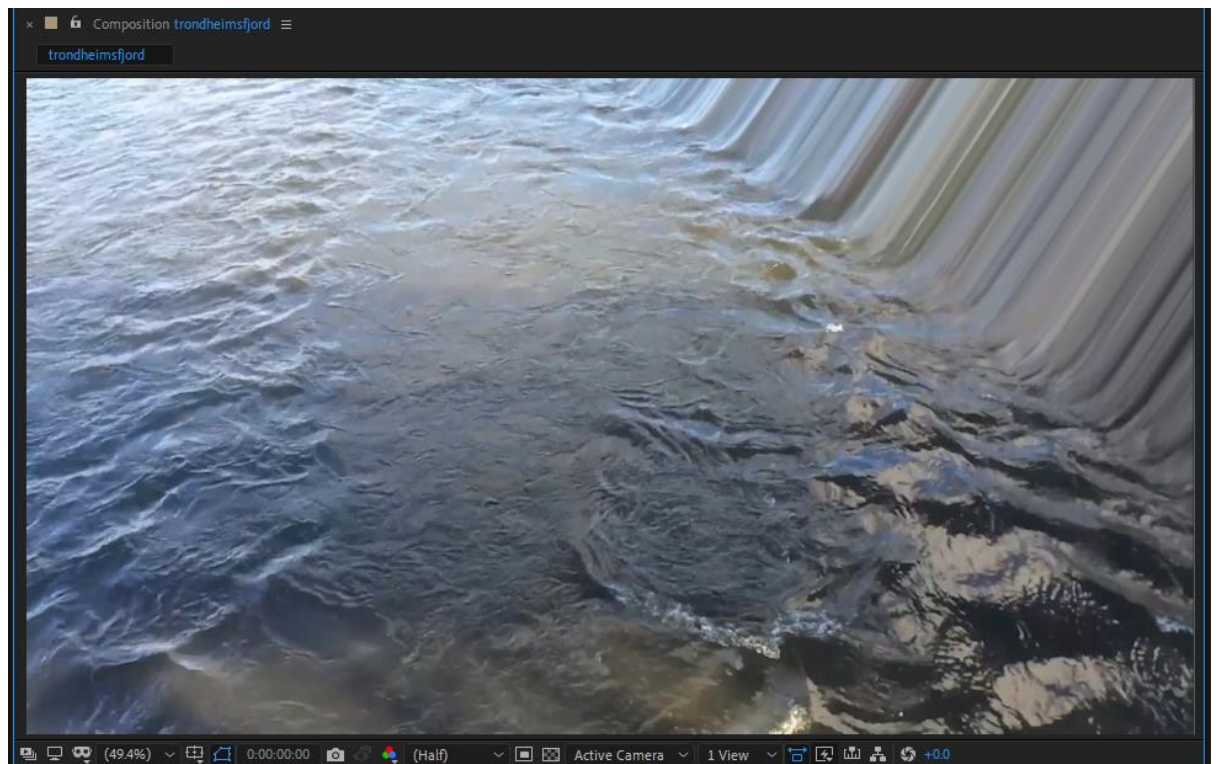


Chapter 3: Screen and Mobility

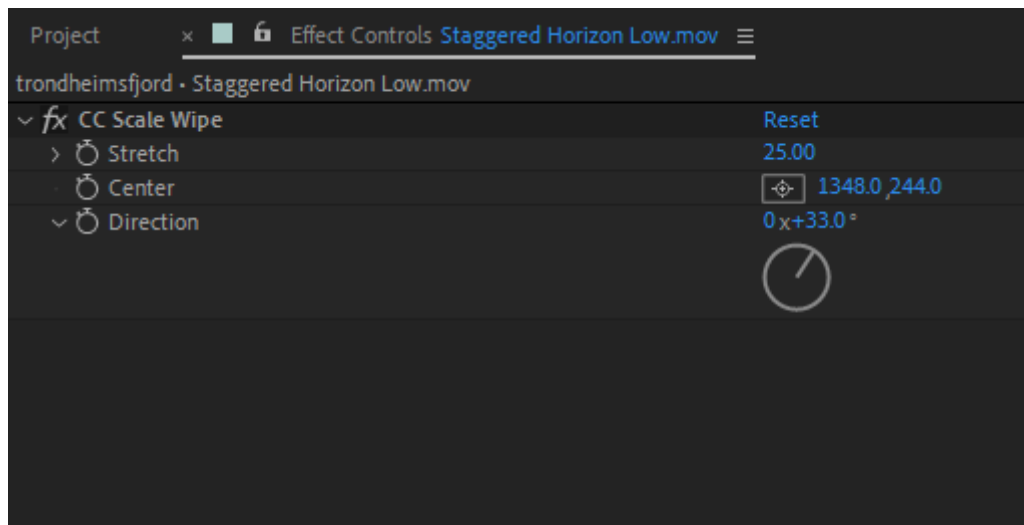
Fig. 16: 'Staggered Horizon' (2015)

This work features an effect employed in Adobe After Effects entitled 'CC Scale Wipe'. This effect is applied over the raw footage to allow for a sense of coherency between separate screens when installed. This editing technique applies to the following other works: Figs 17 & 18: 'Horizon slip 1' (2016), Figs 19 & 20: 'Horizon slip 2' (2016), Fig. 47: 'wave slip' (2015), and Fig. 51: 'Sunset Pan' (2016).

Frame



Effects



Timeline

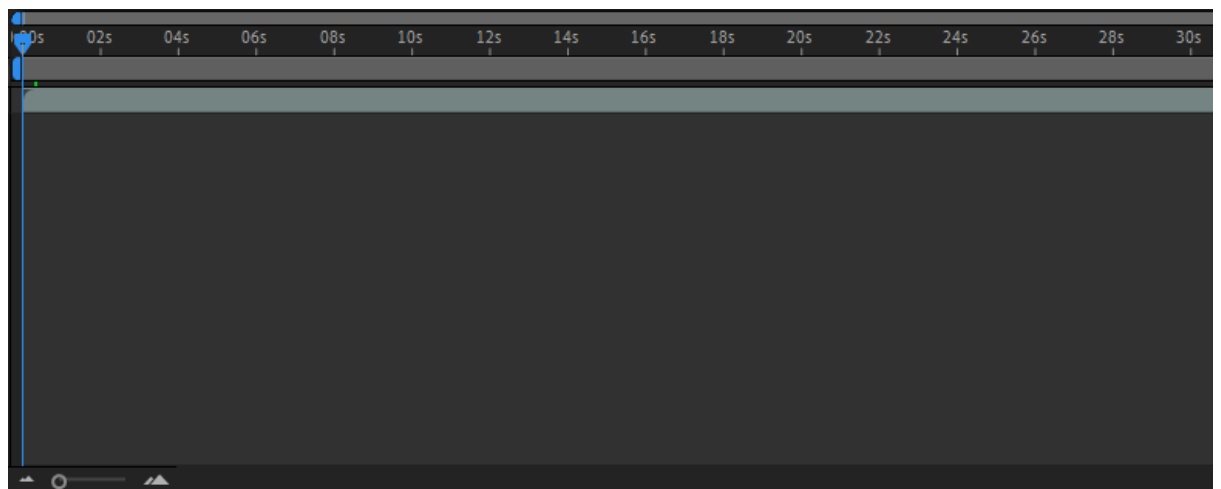
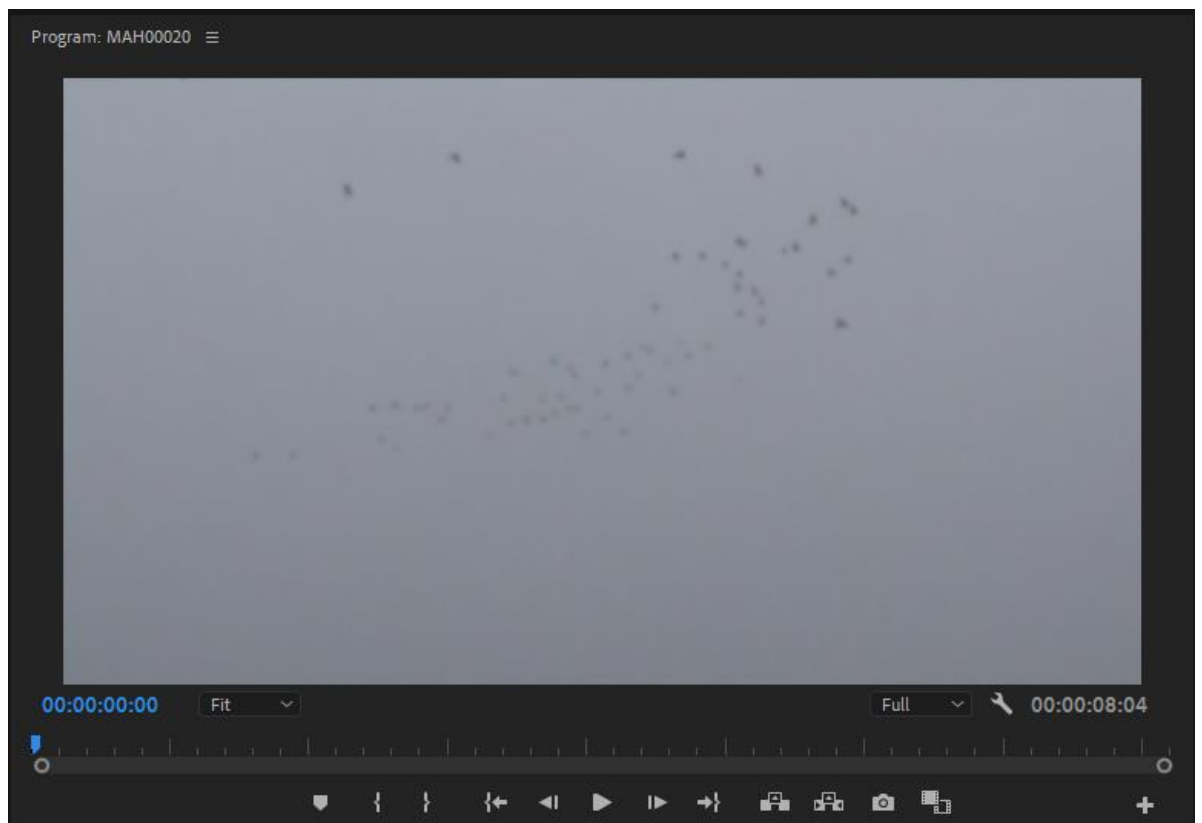


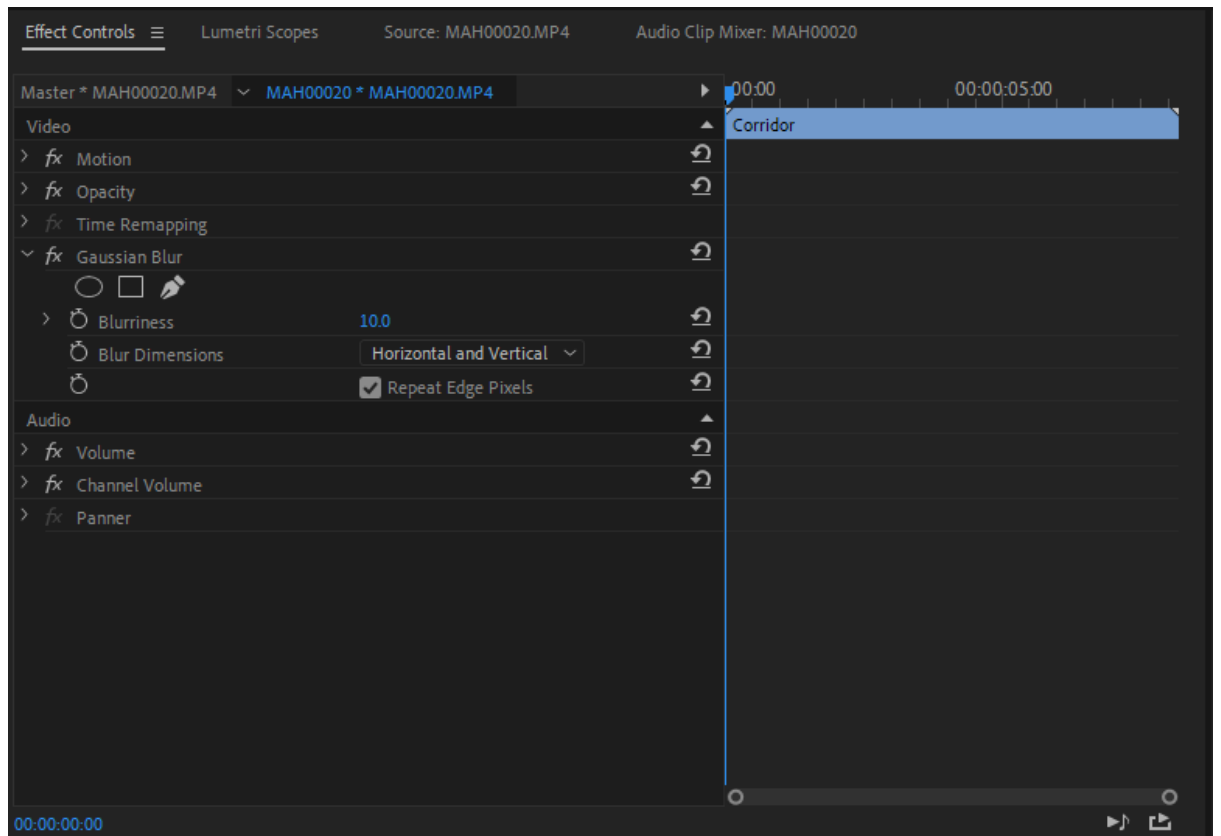
Fig. 30: 'Corridor' (2018)

This work features effect entitled 'Gaussian Blur' in Adobe After Effects. This blur effect is reduced gradually for each screened iteration of the 'Corridor' (2018) installation. This editing technique applies to the following other works: Figs 31, 32, 33, and 34: 'Corridor' (2018).

Frame



Effects



Timeline

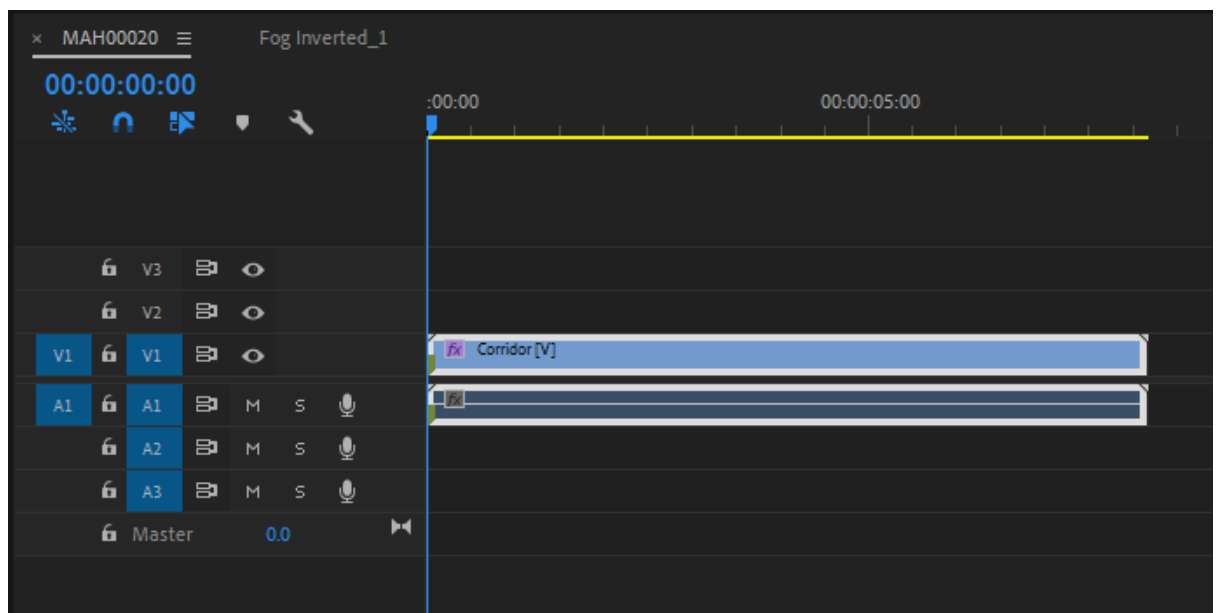
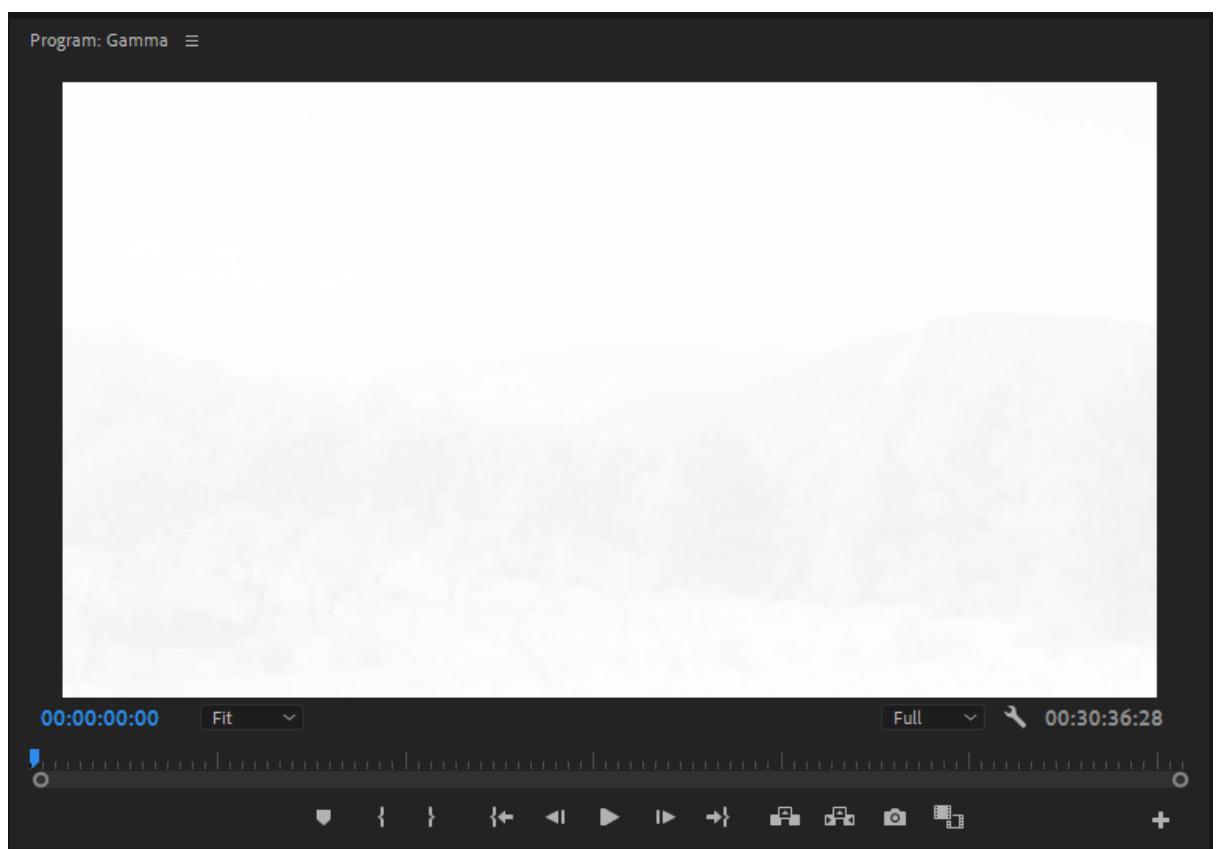


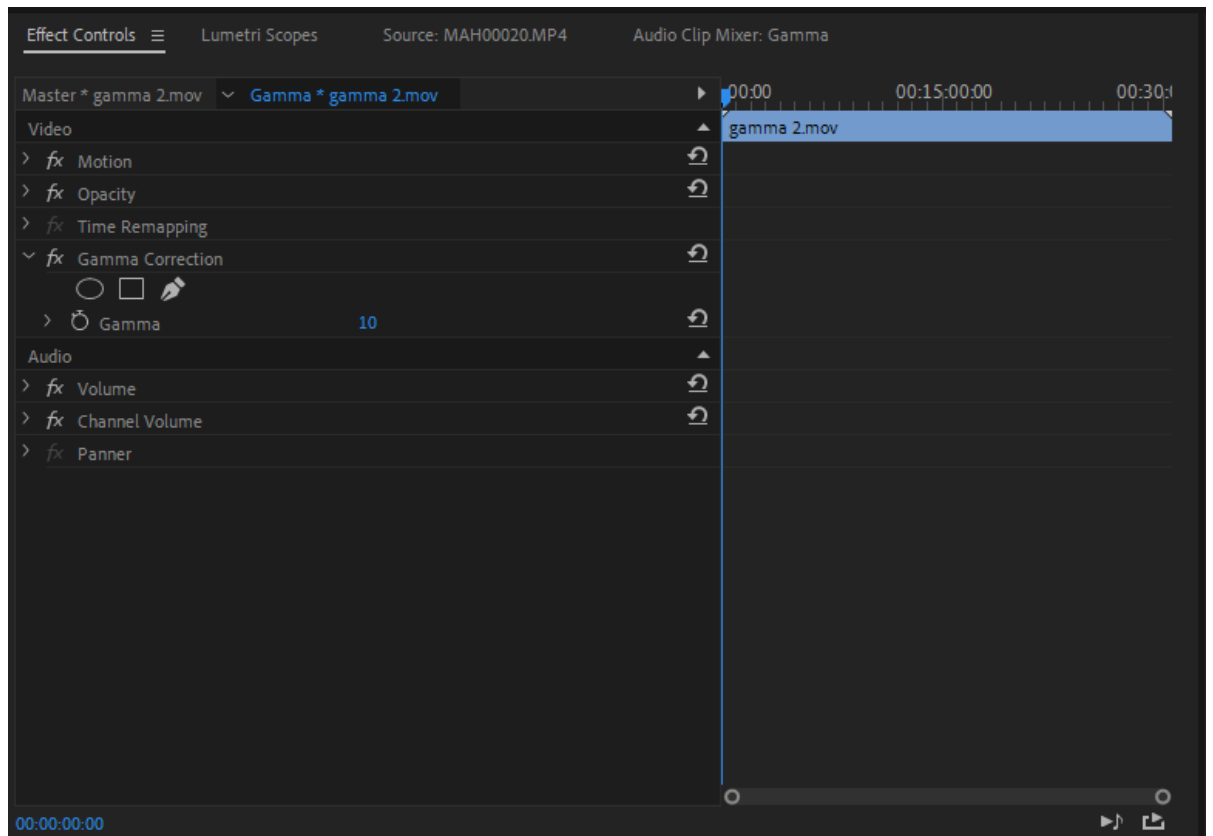
Fig. 37: 'Gamma' (2018)

This work features an effect entitled 'Gamma Correction' generated in Adobe Premiere Pro, which allows for a gamma adjustment to the video in question. The resulting work has been adjusted to only become visible when viewed from specific angles, with dramatically different results depending on the screen hardware used to view the work.

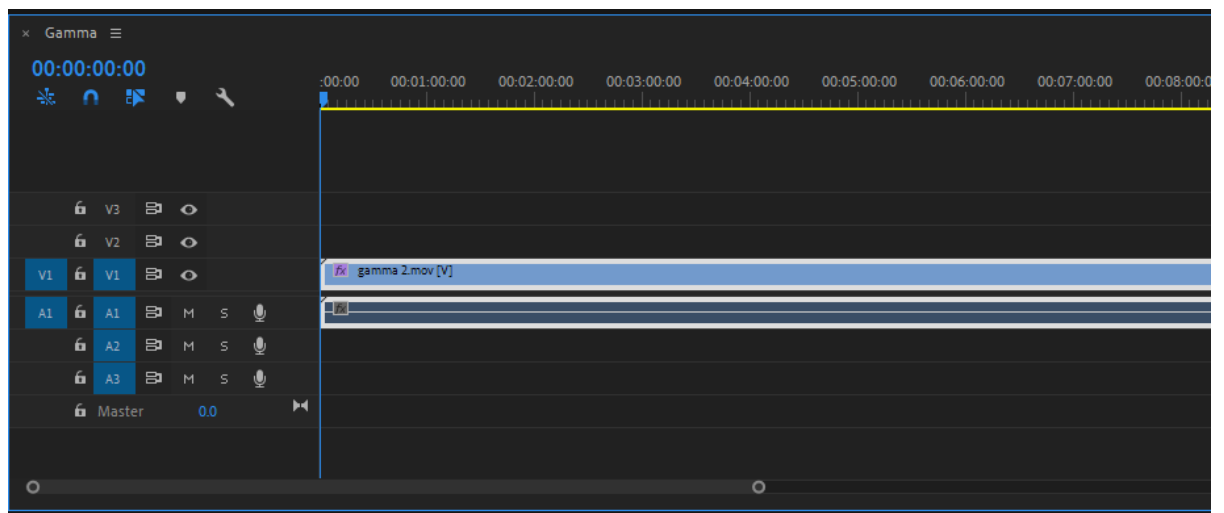
Frame



Effects



Timeline

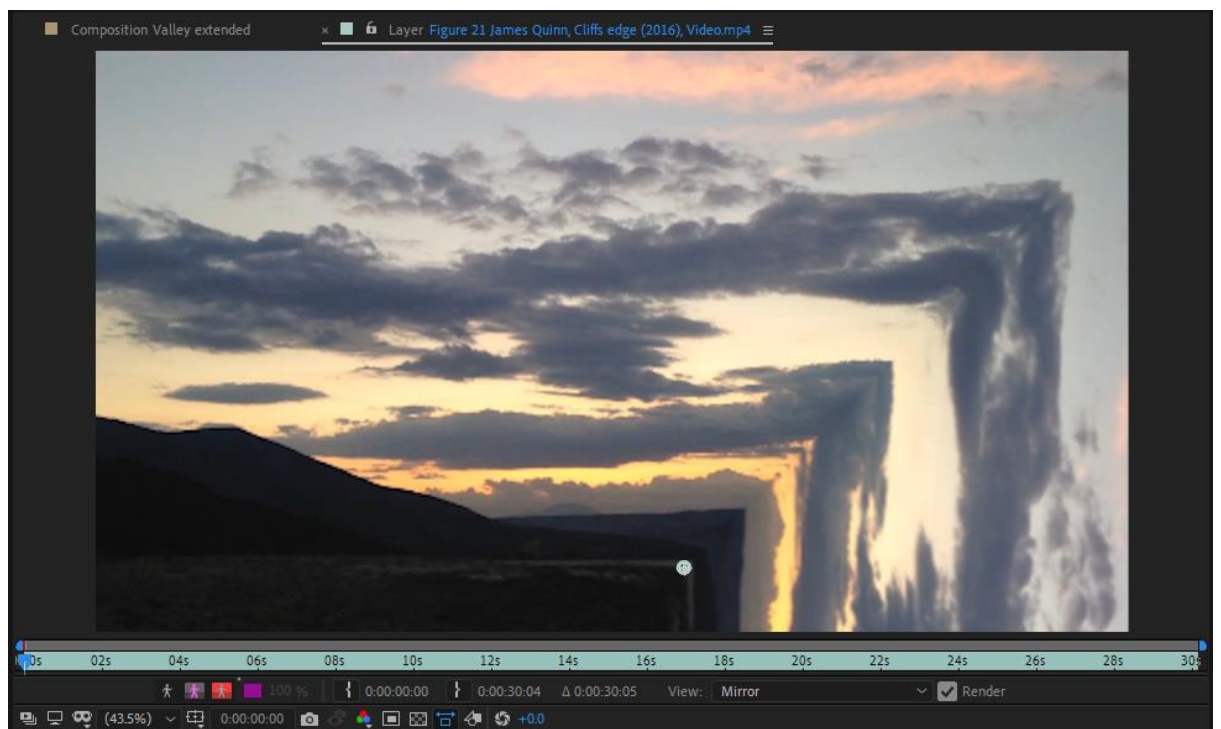


Chapter 4: The Problematic Image

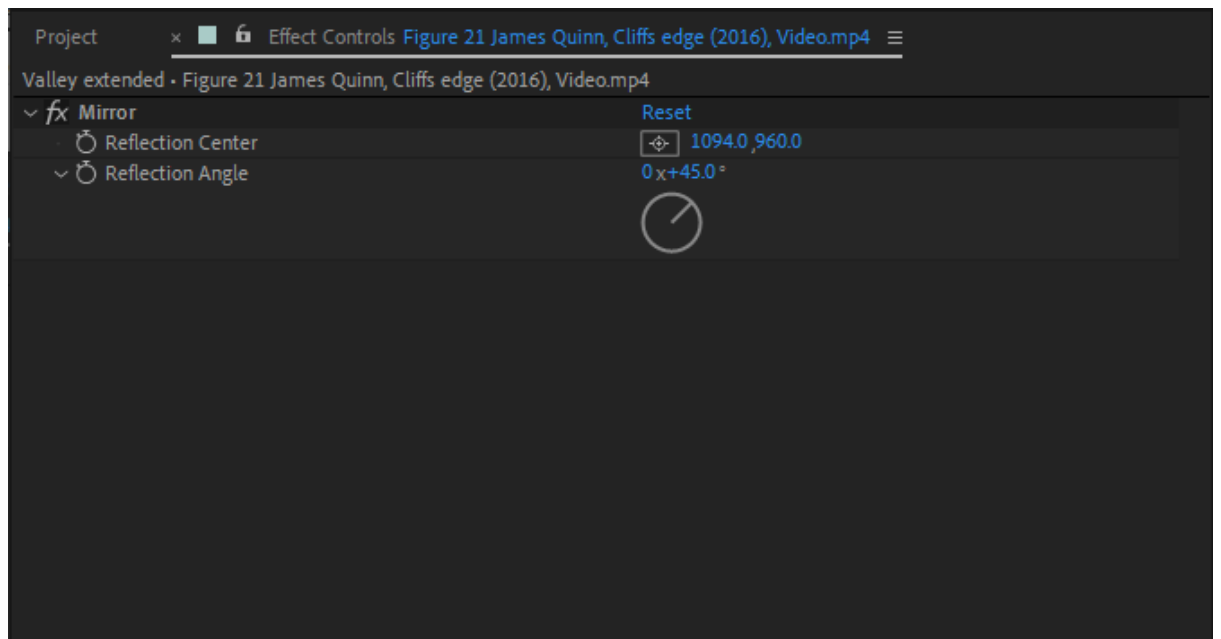
Fig. 50: 'Cliffs Edge' (2016)

This work features an effect entitled 'mirror' generated in Adobe After Effects, employed to create a sharp drop off point in the image at a 45 degree angle.

Frame



Effects



Timeline

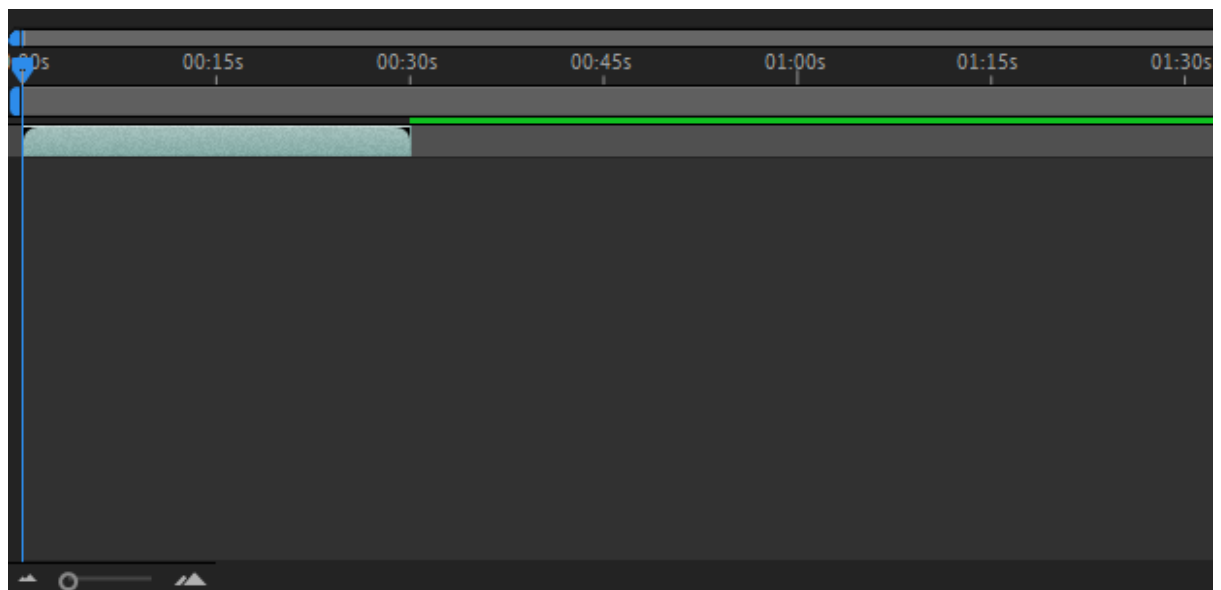
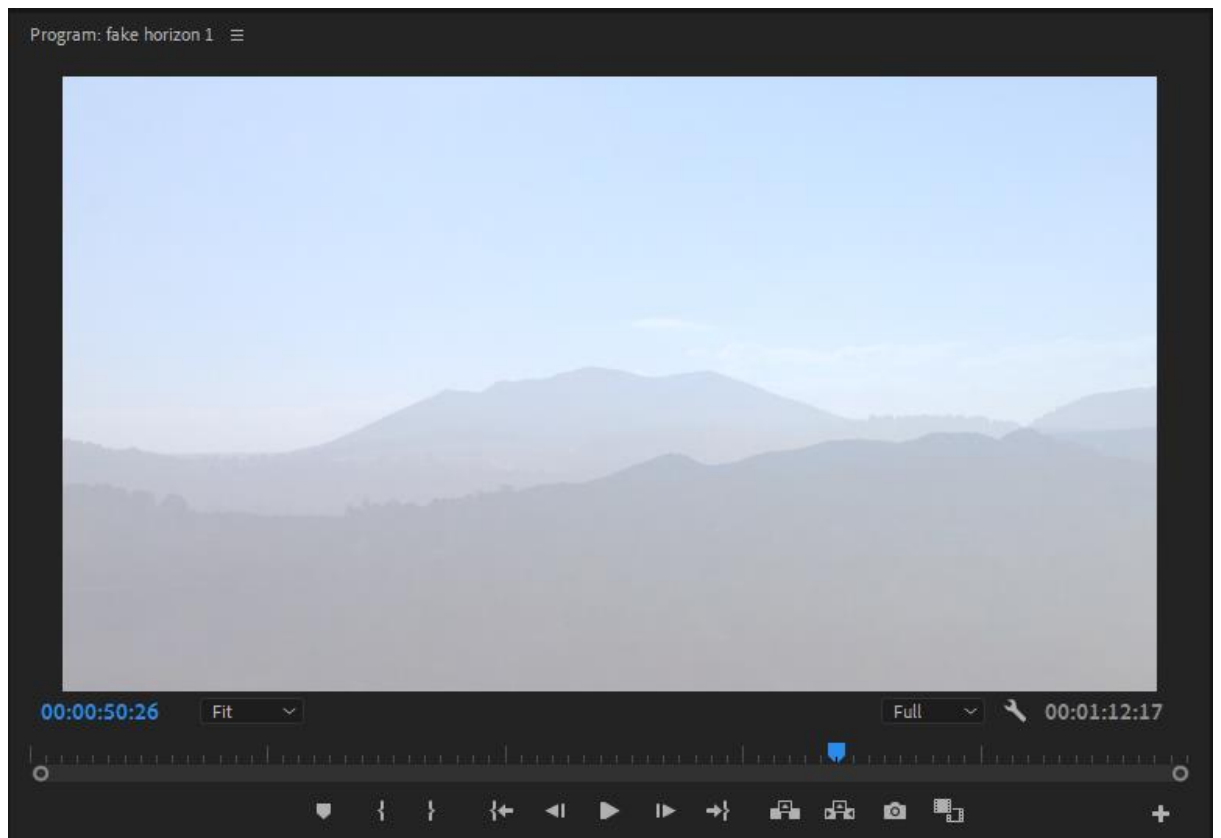


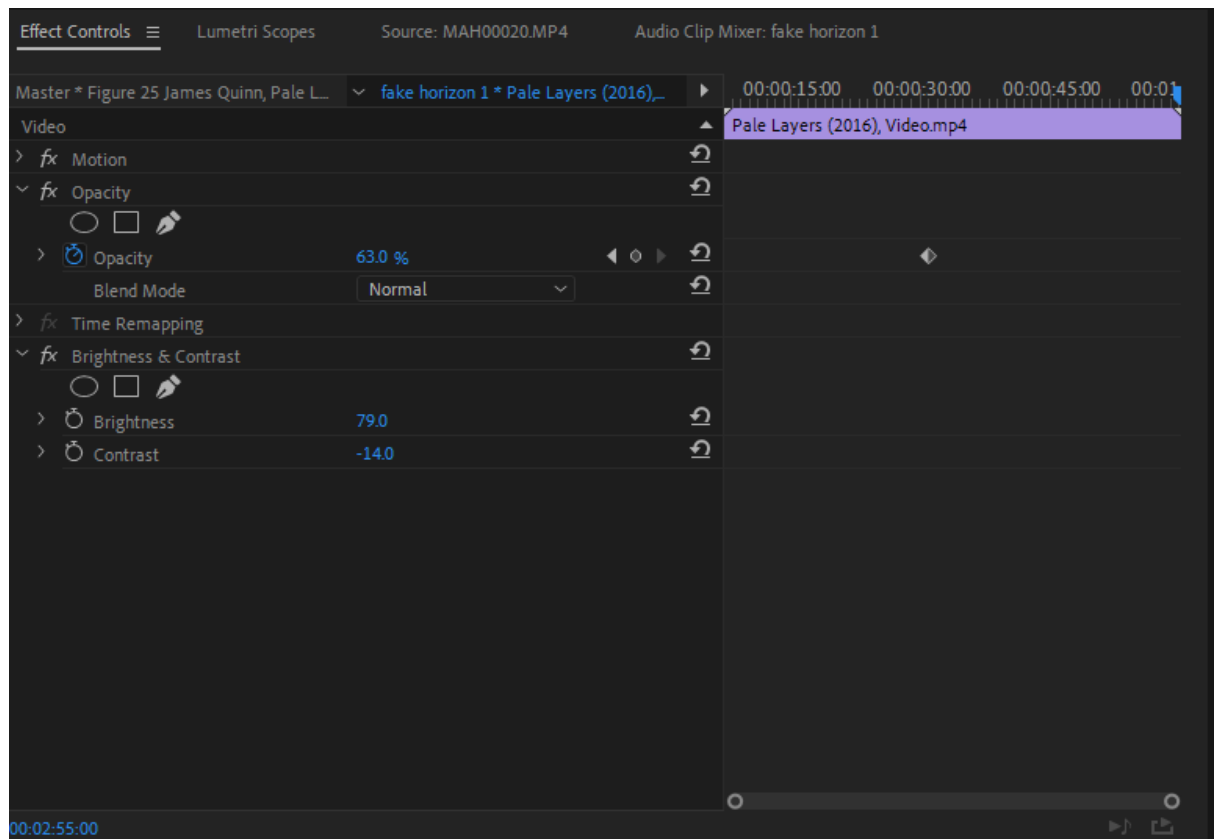
Fig. 52: 'Pale Layers' (2016)

This work was generated on Adobe Premiere Pro and features intersecting layers of video footage, each with a different degree of opacity, brightness and contrast.

Frame



Effects



Timeline

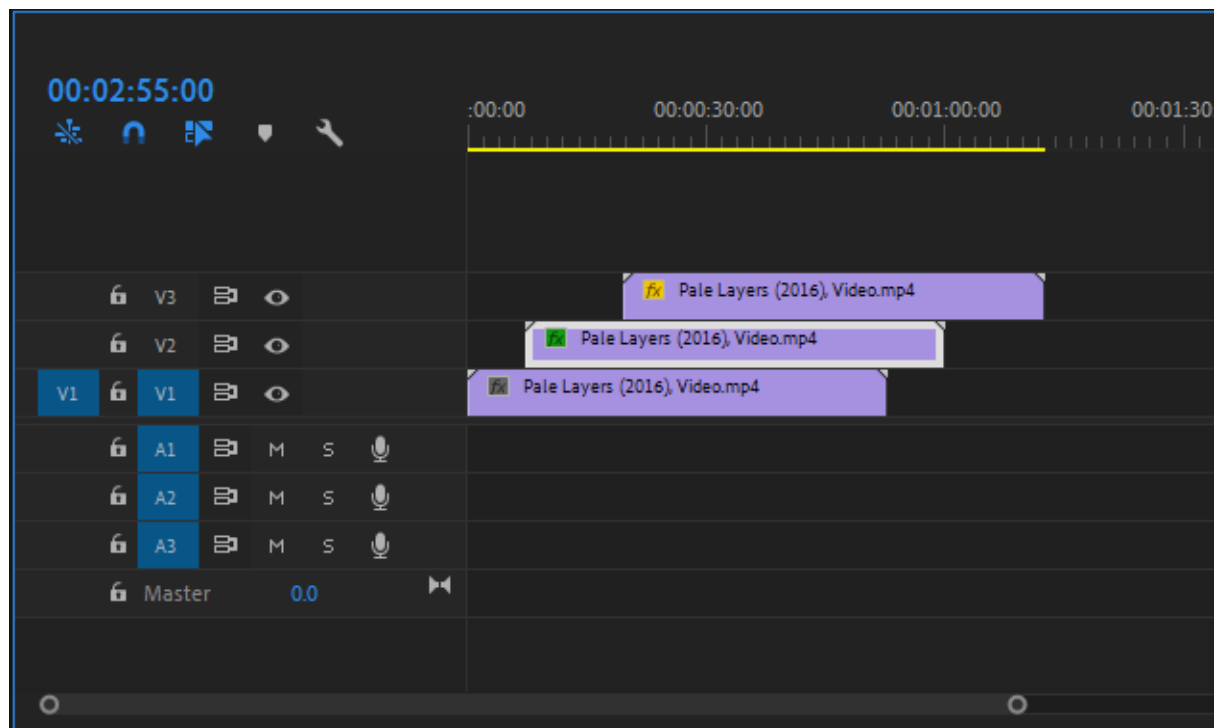
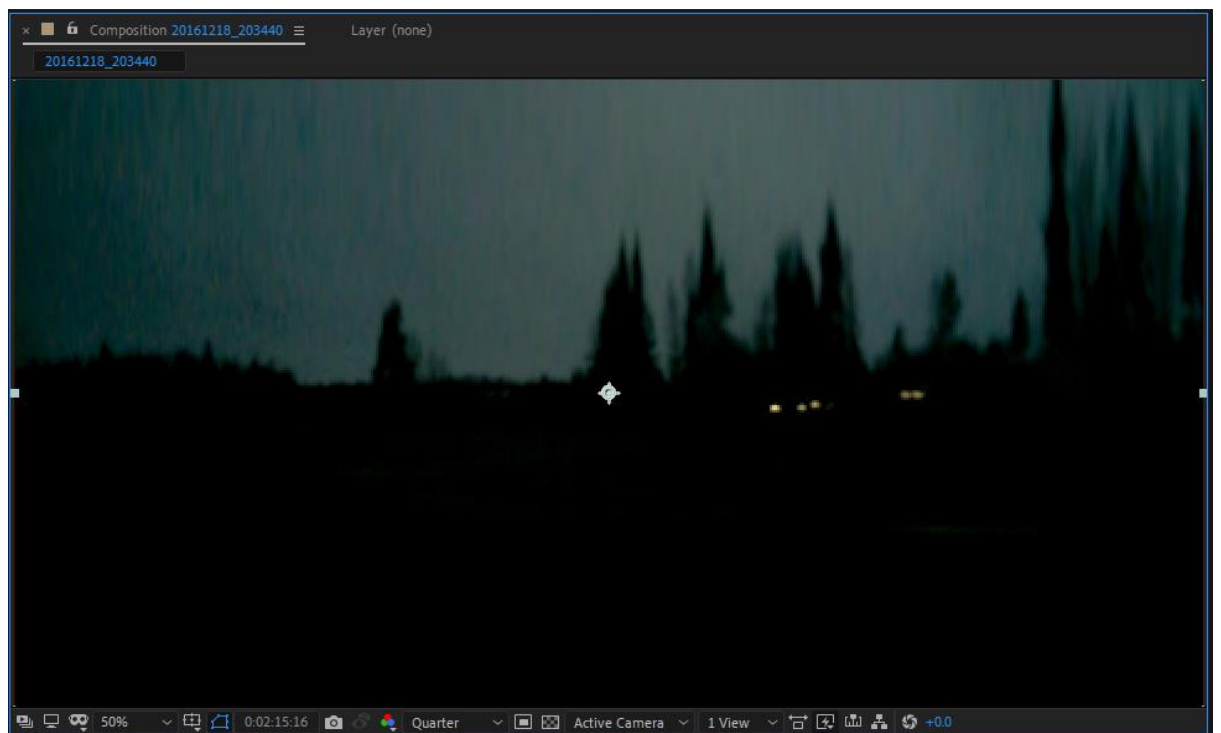


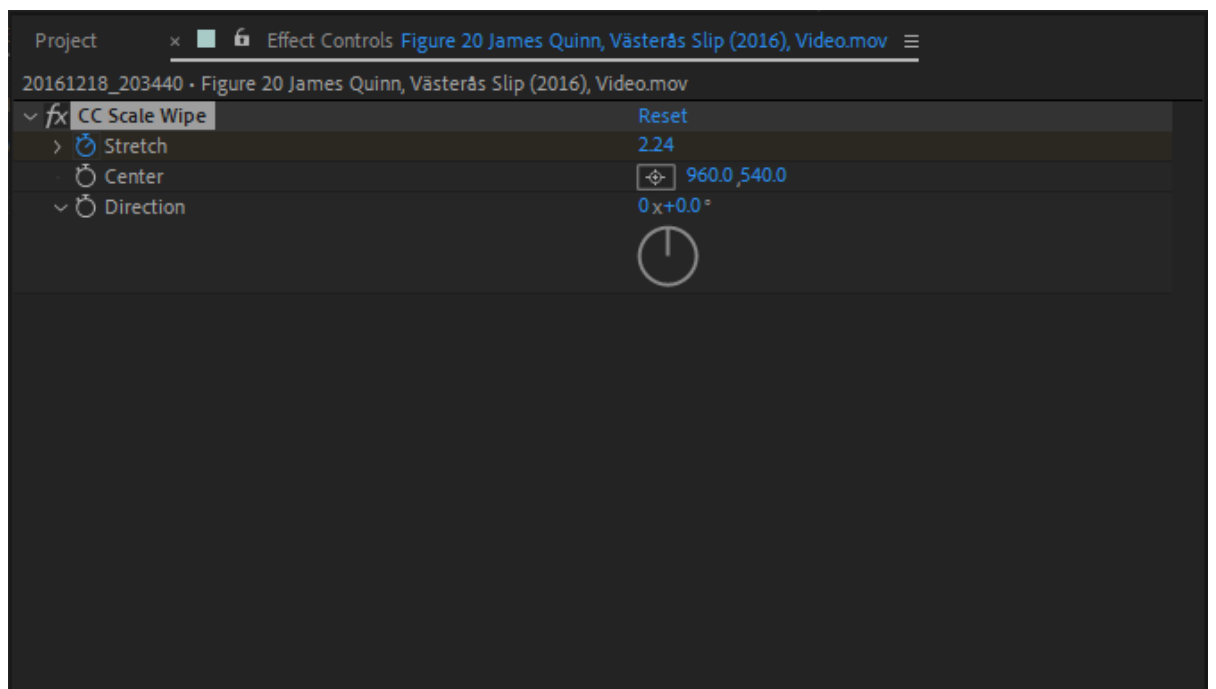
Fig. 57: 'Västerås Slip' (2016)

This work features the gradual use of the effect 'CC Scale Wipe', generated in Adobe After Effects. Applied gradually across the duration of the piece, the effect serves to increasingly distort the panning shot in the video, itself filmed from a moving vehicle.

Frame



Effects



Timeline

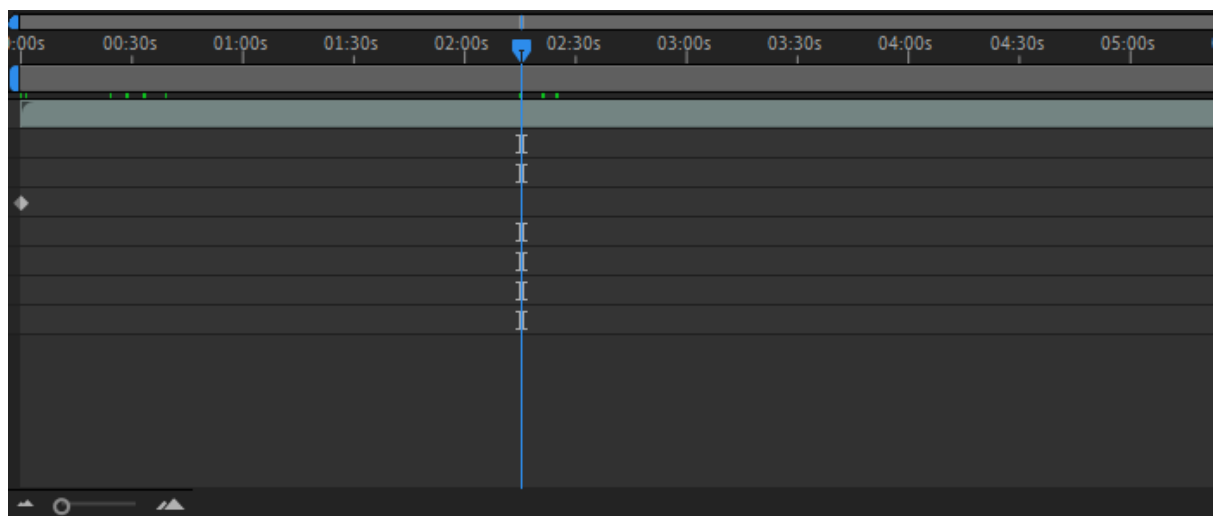
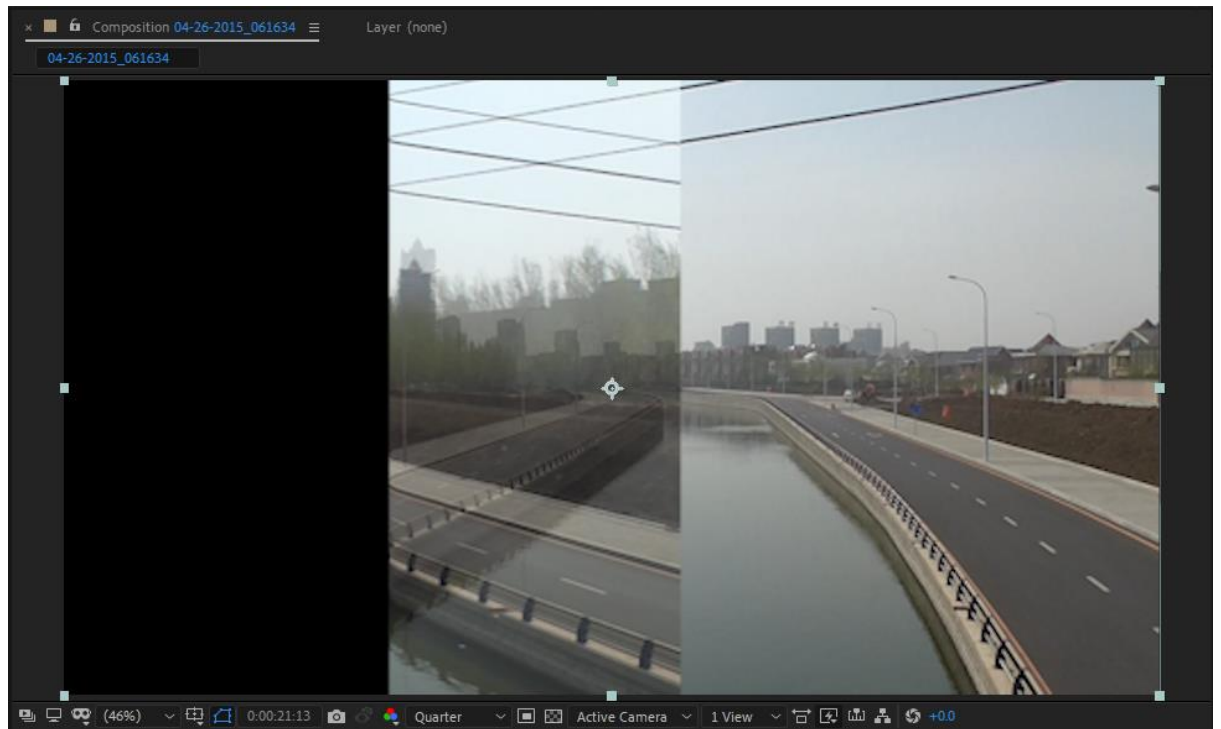


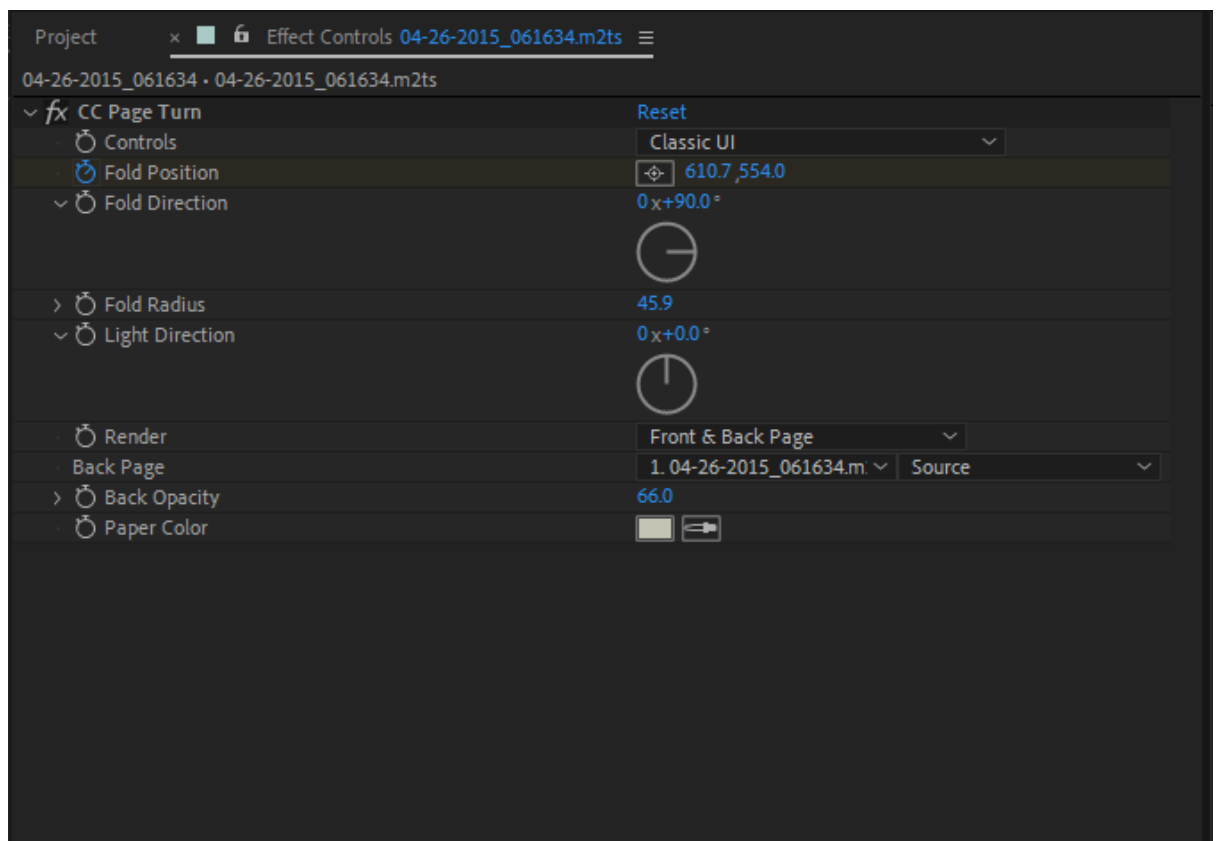
Fig. 70: Ben Fox and James Quinn, 'Shenyang Fold' (2015)

This work features an effect titled 'Page Turn' generated in Adobe After Effects. This effect is applied across the piece's duration to create an overlapping, folding impression.

Frame



Effects



Timeline

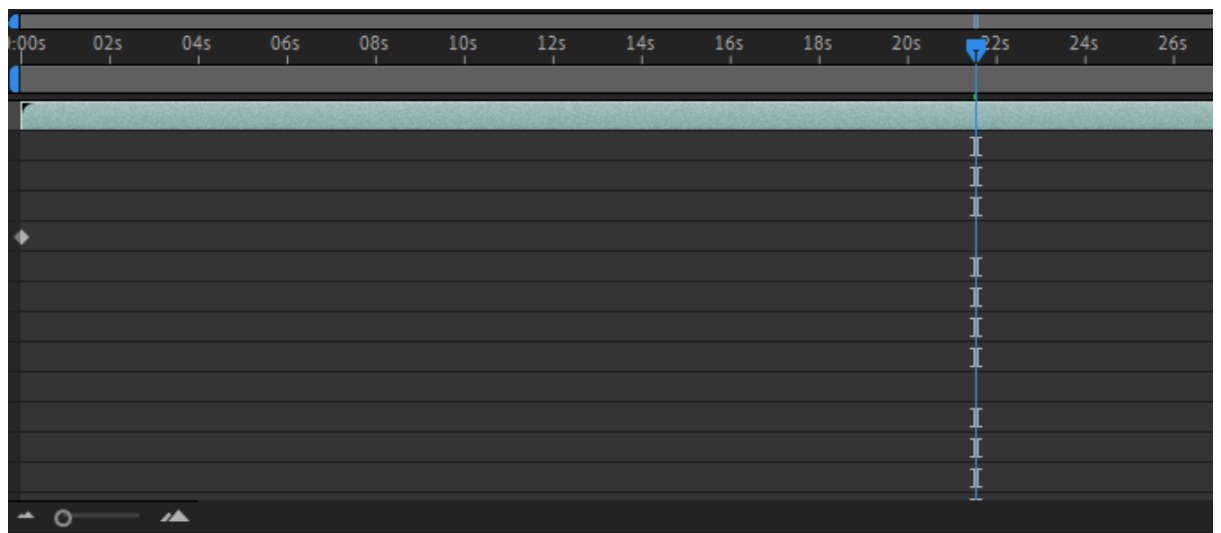
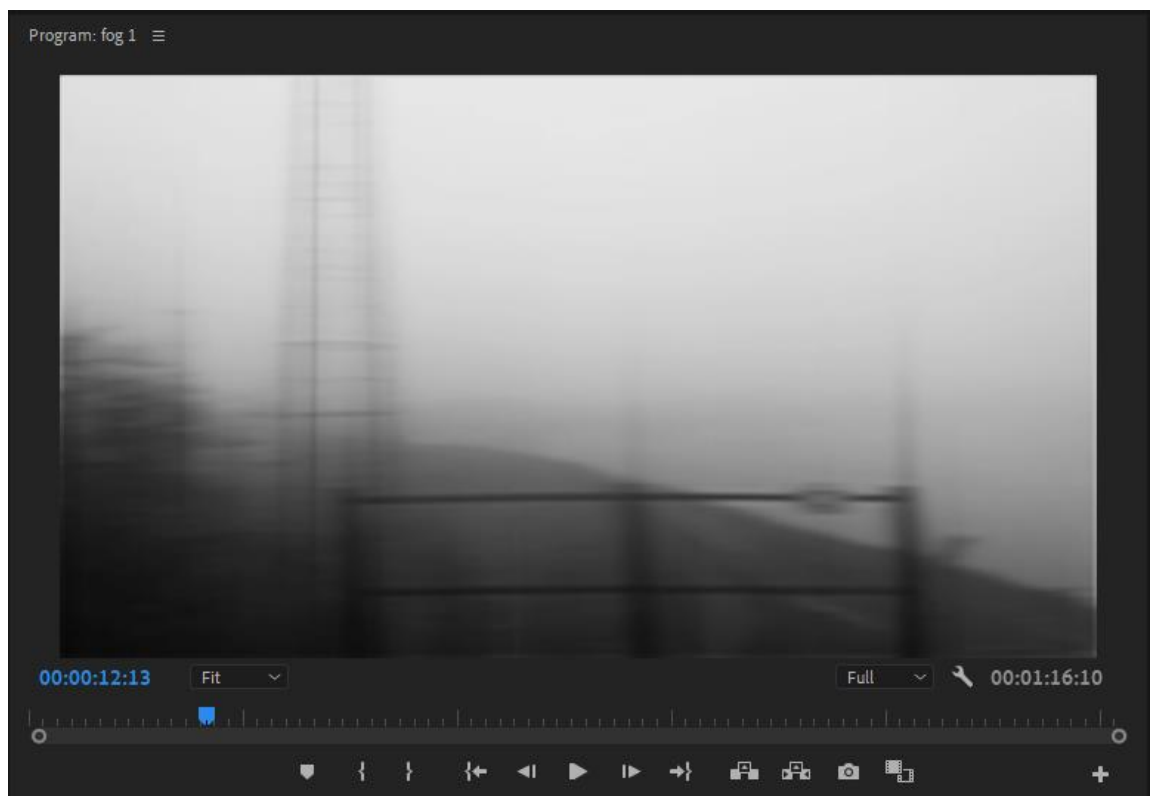


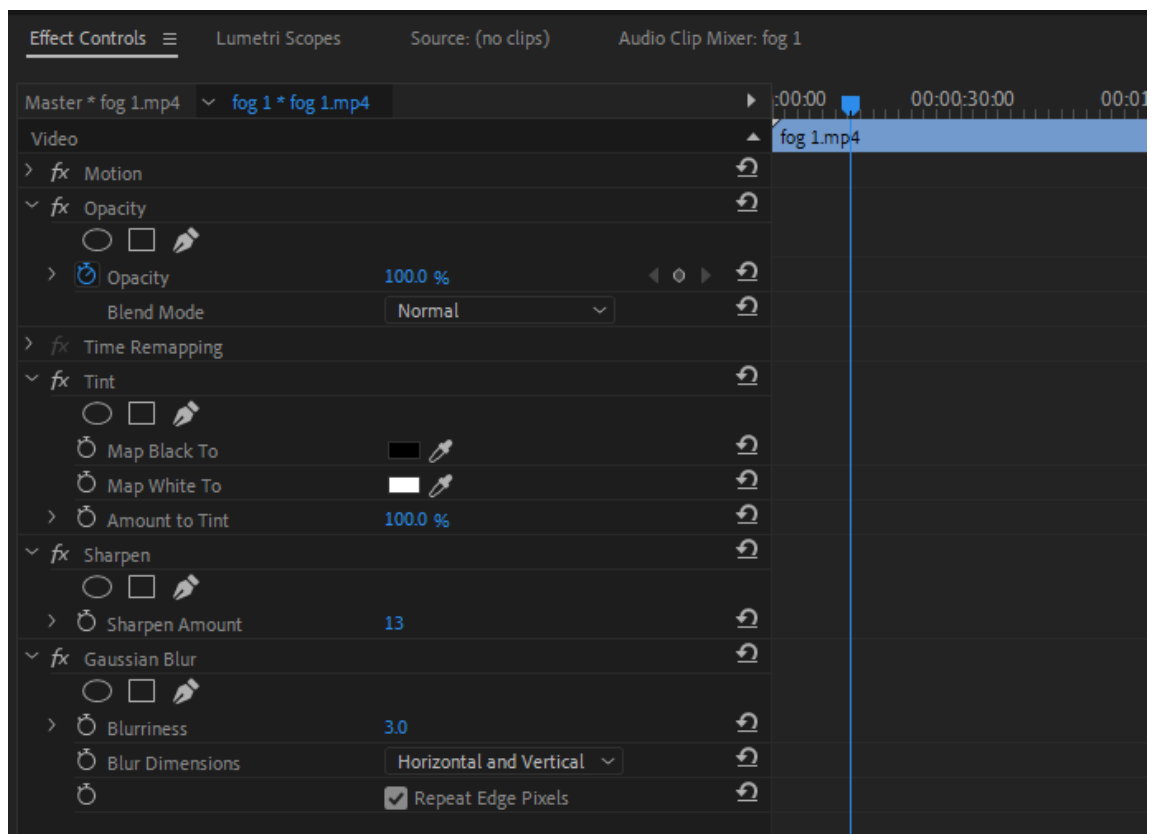
Fig. 77: 'Fog' (2016)

This work features a combination of three effects, 'Tint', 'Sharpen' and 'Gaussian Blur', generated in Adobe Premiere Pro. The footage itself was captured from a moving vehicle, resulting in the presented panning effect.

Frame



Effects



Timeline

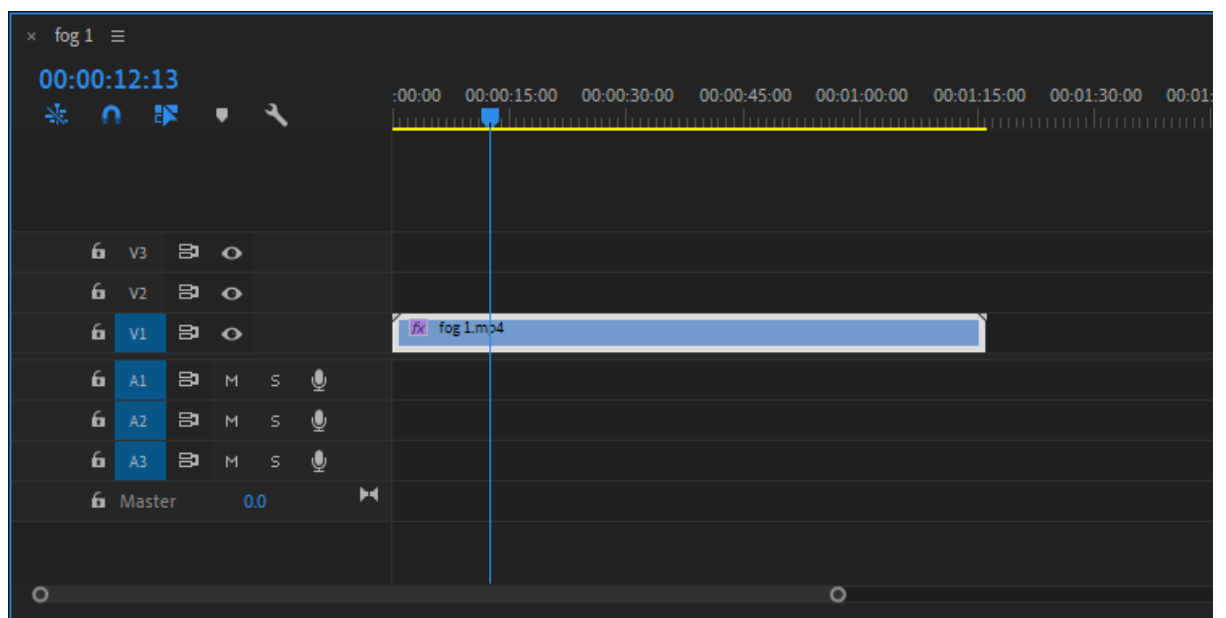
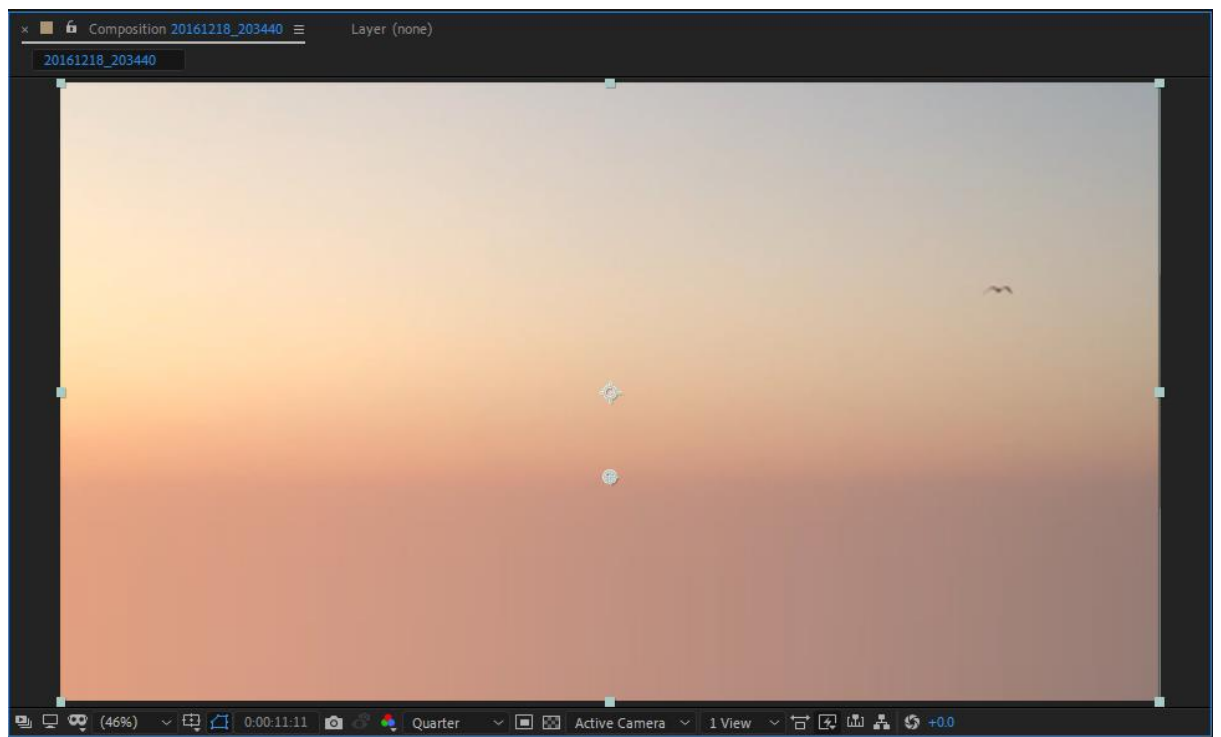


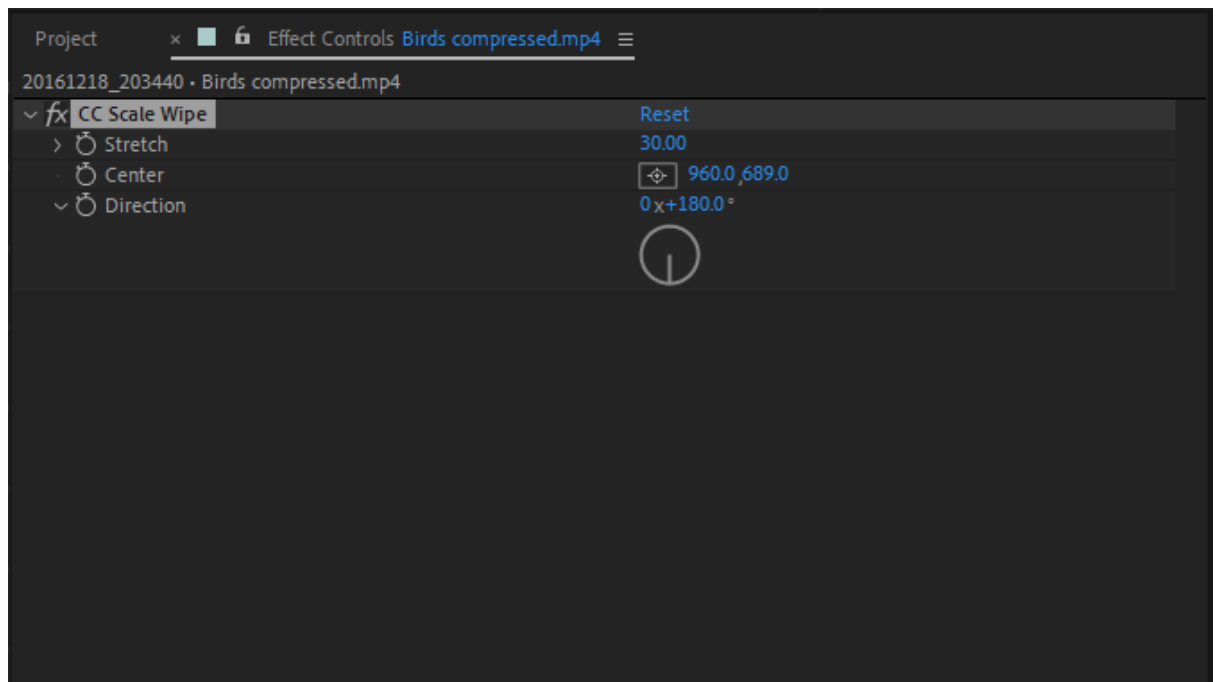
Fig. 79: 'Birds' (2016)

This work features the effect 'CC Scale Wipe', generated in Adobe After Effects. This effect, when positioned at the appropriate point on the static shot in the raw video footage allows for a sense of erasure of the lower part of the work. This edited footage is then perpetually looped in Adobe Premiere Pro to create the final outcome.

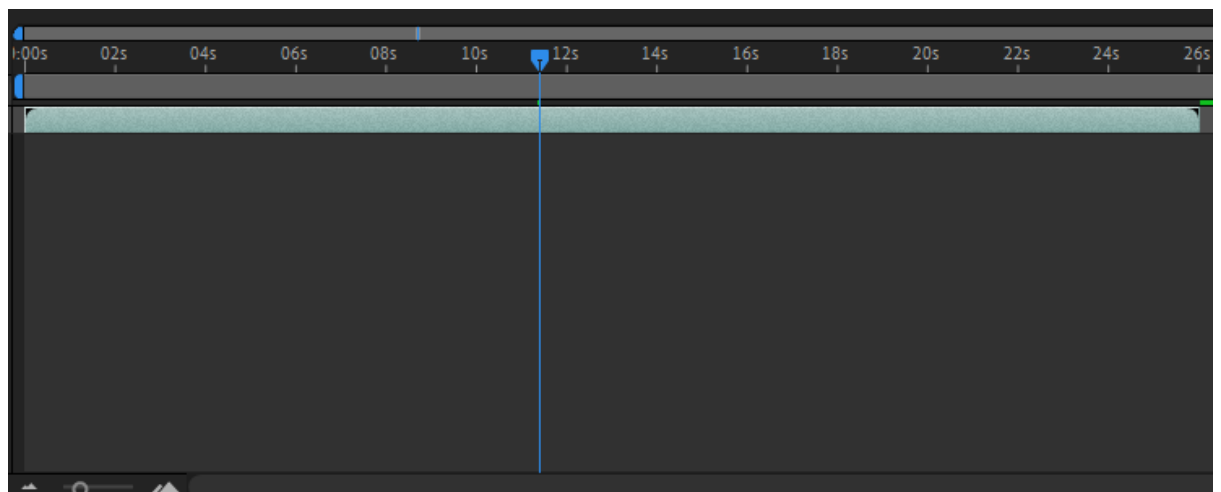
Frame



Effects



Timeline



Acknowledgements

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